

Pumpkins



Pumpkins are a part of the gourd family, which also includes cucumbers, honeydew melons, cantaloupe, watermelons, squash, and zucchini. These plants are native to Central America, and pumpkins have been growing in North America for thousands of years.

Illinois farmers grow more pumpkins than anywhere else in the world. Most of these pumpkins are processing pumpkins for products like canned pumpkin, but there are many U-pick pumpkin patches that grow a number of other varieties of pumpkins and even squash.



Although one of the most popular uses of pumpkins is the fall tradition of carving jack-o'-lanterns, there is another fun tradition that is not as common: giant pumpkin competitions! The first giant pumpkin was exhibited by William Warnock at the 1893 Chicago World Fair, which weighed 365 pounds. Today, Travis Gienger holds the world record of growing a giant pumpkin that weighed 2,749 pounds.



There are hundreds of different types of pumpkins around the world. Pumpkins can range in size from less than 1 pound to more than 1,000 pounds. Pumpkins can also range in color and shape. Round, orange pumpkins are the most common, but there are also blue, white, yellow, spotted, striped, bumpy, and even pear-shaped pumpkins!



Meet the Negangard Family

Negangard Pumpkin Patch | Sidney, IL



Tell us about your farm.

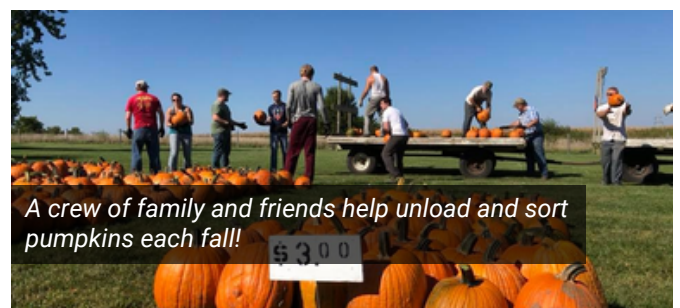
We are a small family farm in southern Champaign County. Our family has been farming here for 5 generations, but the pumpkin patch did not start until around the mid 1970s. What started as just a few pumpkins in the garden, has today turned into 35 acres of over 150 different varieties of pumpkins, gourds, and squash. If there is a shape, size, or color that you can imagine, there's a good chance that we grow it! Outside of the pumpkin patch we have corn, soybeans, wheat, oats, sunflowers, and alfalfa. We also have a few different farm animals which include cows, pigs, goats, chickens, and ducks.

How do you plant your pumpkin seeds?

We plant our pumpkins, and other crops, in the spring when the soil temperature begins to warm up, so for us it's usually in May. The growing season for our pumpkins ranges from 75 days to 120 days until maturity; typically the bigger the pumpkin the longer it takes to mature. Many other pumpkin patches use farm equipment to plant the seeds, but we plant all of our seeds individually, by hand. This might seem a little crazy, but we grow each variety in their own section so we can monitor each one for how well it grows, so it works better for us to plant by hand!

How do you sell your pumpkins?

We harvest our pumpkins each year around the middle of September, and we start our business on either the 3rd or 4th weekend, depending on when the pumpkins are ready. Just like planting, we harvest every pumpkin by hand. We have crews that go out to the field and load the trailers and rack wagons by hand and then unload by hand when they get back to the yard. All of our crops are very prone to busting or bruising if dropped, so they must be handled and hauled with care! Everything is then sold at the farm, in the yard, where everything is laid out and priced accordingly.



All photos on this page courtesy of Negangard Pumpkin Patch