PUMPKINS HAVE SEVERAL USES

A popular crop for fall decorations and fun to grow is the pumpkin. Pumpkins are seen as jack-o-lanterns in October and as part of cornucopias in November. They make delicious pies and other desserts. Figure one pound of raw, untrimmed pumpkin for each cup finished pumpkin puree. Eighty percent of the pumpkin supply in the United States is available in October. The Connecticut field variety is the traditional American pumpkin. The top pumpkin production states are Illinois, Ohio, Pennsylvania and California. According to the University of Illinois, 90 percent of the pumpkins grown in the United States are raised within a 90-mile radius of Peoria, Illinois. Pumpkins originated in Central America and are 90 percent water. They are members of the vine crops family called cucurbits. Their flowers are edible, and they range in size from less than a pound to over 1,000 pounds. Never carry a pumpkin by its stem, as it may break. If it does break off you can use toothpicks as a basic patch. Look for a pumpkin with 1 to 2 inches of stem left. If the stem is cut down too low the pumpkin will decay quickly or may be decaying at the time of purchase. Avoid pumpkins with blemishes and soft spots. Care should be taken not to bruise your pumpkin during transport or storage, as this will shorten its life-span. Shape is not that important. A lopsided pumpkin is not necessarily a bad pumpkin.

Source: University of Illinois Extension

LADY LANDOWNER WORKSHOP TO BE HELD IN KAHOKA

A lady landowner workshop will be held at the Sever Library in Kahoka from 10-3 on Tuesday, October 25. Topics will include gardening, ag-business, forestry, trees, NRCS update, and a personality game called True Colors. The workshop is free and open to lady landowners and anyone else interested in attending. Lunch will be provided. Pre-register by calling the Clark Co. Extension Office at 660-727-3339 or the Adair Co. Extension office at 660-665-9866. The workshop is sponsored by the Clark County Soil and Water Conservation District and University of Missouri Extension.

MASTER GARDENER TRAINING TO BE OFFERED THIS FALL

University of Missouri Extension Master Gardener training classes will be offered October 6-December 15, 2011 in Kirksville. Classes will be held on Thursdays from 6:30-8:30 pm. A wide variety of gardening topics including diseases, insects, soils & fertilizer, vegetables, fruit, trees & shrubs, pruning, lawn care, flowers and landscaping will be offered. Cost for the training is $150 per person, but $50 is refundable upon completion of 30 hours of volunteer service within one year. To be a Master Gardener, you must attend 30 hours of classroom training AND provide 30 hours of volunteer service your first year after training. For more information and to register, call 660-665-9866 or get the brochure from our Website.
TIPS FOR FALL GARDENING

Fall is a great time of the year for adding trees and shrubs to the landscape. The warm soil and cool air is good for root development. In some cases, plants that are planted in the fall tend to establish themselves better than ones planted in the spring. This is because they have all of the fall and all of the following spring to get established before the most stressful time of the year which is summer.

Fall is the time to buy and plant spring flowering bulbs like tulips and daffodils. They are available in garden centers throughout the fall. Keep in mind that some bulbs are only available in limited quantities, so it is best to shop early, especially for the new and unusual varieties. The best time to plant your bulbs is in October, when the weather is cool and stays cool. When planting your bulbs, plant them in clusters. Dig a hole 6 to 8 inches in diameter and put 5 to 7 bulbs in each hole. Planting them like this will create a “bouquet” look. You can even plant the bulbs at different levels in the same hole to extend the time that they bloom. If you dig a hole 8" deep you can place 3 or 4 bulbs at 8" deep and then cover them with soil and then plant 3 or 4 more at 6" deep. When you do this, the bulbs planted at 8" deep will start flowering when the ones at 6" are almost finished.

Fall is the best time of the year to renovate your lawn and plant grass seed. The warm soil and cool air are ideal for establishing new grass. If you are going to renovate your lawn, you need to first eliminate the weeds. You need at least two weeks to make sure that you have most of the weeds eliminated in your yard, before you start to plant your seed. The best time to plant your new seed to have it established this fall, is the middle to end of September. Contact your county extension office for a step-by-step guide sheet on how to renovate your lawn.

Fertilize your existing lawn, especially fescue lawns, in the fall. You can fertilize in September and again in November. Fertilizer applied in November should be a winterizer.

After the summer, many shade trees and shrubs may be suffering from the stress of the drought. We have not had a good soaking rain for some time now, so you may have to water trees and shrubs that are showing signs of drought stress. As your summer flowers fade away, there are lots of plants that you can plant for fall color. You can plant hardy chrysanthemums, asters, ornamental cabbage and kale, and pansies. Most people think of planting pansies in the spring. You can get two seasons from pansies if you plant them in the fall. They love the cool weather and will be very colorful through the fall. They will lie dormant through most of the winter, but will spring up on warm days. I would recommend covering them with straw to give them extra protection through the winter months. If we have a long, cold winter, there is a chance they will not survive. Next spring, if they made it through the winter, they will be even bigger and more beautiful.

What can be done before a frost to prolong a vegetable garden? Several things. If you have tomatoes left on the vine and don’t want to see them go to waste, pick all of the green mature fruit before the killing frost. Wrap the tomatoes in a brown paper bag and store between 60 and 65 degrees Fahrenheit. The tomatoes will continue to ripen slowly over the next several weeks. Whole plants can be uprooted and hung in sheltered locations, where the fruit will continue to ripen. Another common question this time of year is how to prolong the harvest period of root crops like carrots and turnips without digging and storing them. Summer-planted carrots and fall turnips may be left in the ground until a killing frost. Some gardeners place straw mulch over the row so these crops can be harvested until the ground freezes solid. For more information on fall gardening tips, contact your county extension center.
LOCAL FOOD UPDATE

I didn’t think I would get tired of preserving local food, but after canning salsa, pickles and okra and freezing various other vegetables and making grape juice, I’m done until next year, or at least I think I am. It does take a lot of time to do it, and I only have time after my youngest son goes to sleep at night or is napping on the weekends, but it is so worth it. I’ve had many people tell me their tomatoes haven’t done well at all this summer, and I can say mine have not either. I’m still waiting to pick some nice, big tomatoes. Since it cooled off, my tomato plants have put on new growth and have set a lot of fruit. Now, I just hope it will ripen before the first frost. I actually had to buy tomatoes for my salsa from a local producer who grew them in a high tunnel. If your tomatoes don’t ripen before the frost, pick them off and put them in a brown paper bag and they will ripen. I do this every year and it works.

I was able to get some local grapes from a producer I work with, and I made grape juice from ‘Catawba’ and ‘Concord’ grapes and some grape jelly. My friend Teri has a juicer that she said was really cool to use and simple, so I took my grapes to her house and made the ‘Concord’ juice. Then the very next day, I am in my office doing an online training when I get a call from her telling me she is east of Clark, MO in Randolph county at a variety store and she found a juicer for me and that she was going to get it, because it is so cool to use and I really need it. So, I was like, okay Teri, if you think I really need it, get it and I’ll pay you back. So, she drops it off at my house that night. I had just finished making jelly with the concord juice, so she and my kids and I stand in the kitchen and eat jelly by the spoonfuls. It was delicious. The next evening I made the ‘Catawba’ juice. I’m so glad I have that juicer now. If you want to make juice and want a simple way to do it, you need to get this juicer. It’s found at most Amish variety stores, at least here in the Northeast Region.

I pickled some okra for the first time. I was at a dinner meeting with Teri, who had brought some delicious pickled okra, so of course I wanted to make some too. We used a simple method, Mrs. Wages dill pickle mix, rather than making the brine from scratch. They are very good and you can eat them the next day. They do require a water bath. I made a really good okra dish that my mom shared with me. You cook a few strips of bacon in a skillet, cut it into pieces, then add sliced okra, red onion and sliced fresh mushrooms. Add a little garlic salt and let it cook for several minutes. Don’t let it get mushy and serve while hot.

Pumpkins, winter squash and apples are typical fall crops and readily available now. I said I was done preserving food, but I will process some pumpkin and squash to freeze. My kids love pumpkin pancakes, cookies, muffins and whatever else I can make with pumpkin. I already made a vegetable soup with fresh vegetables and pumpkin puree. Fried apples are also a nice seasonal side dish. I slice up apples and put a few slabs of real butter in a skillet and sprinkle cinnamon and sugar on them and cook them until soft. The kids love them. You should be able to find these fall items from a local producer on the farm or at your farmers’ market.

I’ve heard several people say they are ready for fall and they are done with their gardens. Teri and I are not looking forward to the first hard frost. We enjoy being outdoors in our gardens, enjoying the warmth of the sun and the breeze and whatever nature has to offer. We love harvesting and processing local foods and hate to see the gardening season come to an end. Until next month, keep eating local!

FARM TOUR HELD IN PUTNAM COUNTY

A farm tour with a focus on vegetable production was held in Putnam County on July 29. It was amazing to see all the neat things the Carneys and Yunicks have built or installed on their farms to grow vegetables. We saw raised beds for vegetable production, rain barrels to collect rainwater to water the crops, and methods of deer control. I learned a lot and it was great to see the various production methods. A tour is being planned on the same two farms for early June of next year when spring crops will be in production. You must attend and learn how these gardeners incorporate various production methods to grow their vegetable crops.
GARDENING TIPS FOR OCTOBER

ORNAMENTALS
- Plant spring bulb flowers.
- Continue watering, especially evergreens if soils are dry.
- Container grown and balled & burlapped trees and shrubs can be planted. Loosen the soil in an area 5 times the diameter of the root ball before planting. Mulch well after watering.
- For best bloom this winter, Christmas Cactus, potted azaleas, and kalanchoe may be left outdoors until night temperatures drop to about 40 degrees.
- Cannas and dahlias can be dug when frost nips their foliage. Allow plants to dry in an airy, frost-free place before storage.
- Spring bulbs for forcing can be potted now and stored in a cool, frost-free place until it is time to bring indoors, usually for 12-15 weeks.
- Transplant deciduous trees after they have dropped their leaves.

FRUIT
- Persimmons start to ripen, especially after frost.
- Monitor fruit plantings for mouse activity and take steps for their own control if present.
- Place wire guards around trunks of young fruit trees for protection against mice and rabbits.

VEGETABLES
- Continue harvesting tender crops before frost.
- Harvest winter squash and pumpkins before frost.
- Dig sweet potatoes before a hard freeze.
- Gourds should be harvested.
- Sow cover crops such as winter rye after crops are harvested.

TURFGRASS
- Seeding should be finished by October 15.
- Broadleaf herbicides can be applied now to control cool season weeds such as chickweed and dandelion.
- Continue mowing lawns until growth stops.
- Keep leaves raked off grass to prevent smothering grass.
- Now is a good time to apply lime if soil tests indicate the need.
- Winterize lawn mowers before storage.

MISCELLANEOUS
- Week 1-Fall color begins.
- Week 3-BEGIN peak fall color in maples, hickories, and oaks.
- Week 4-END of peak fall color.

— Missouri Botanical Garden —

“October gave a party;
The leaves by hundreds came
The Chestnuts, Oaks, and Maples,
And leaves of every name.
The Sunshine spread a carpet,
And everything was grand,
Miss Weather led the dancing,
Professor Wind the band.”
George Cooper,
October's Party

UPCOMING EVENTS
October 4: Heartland Master Gardener meeting, 7 pm, Area Career Center, Brookfield, program on wild edibles of MO presented by MDC.
October 4: Salt River Master Gardeners, 6 pm, Fiddlesticks restaurant (Hannibal). Recap of the state conference.
October 6: Master Gardener Training starts in Kirksville, Thursdays from 6:30-8:30 pm. Call Adair County Extension at 660-665-9866 for information.
October 11-24: Permaculture Design Course. For more information contact John or Holly Arbuckle at 660-332-4020.
October: Sullivan County Master Gardener meeting.
October: Fabius Master Gardener club meeting.
October: Magic City Master Gardener meeting.
October 18: Kirksville Area Master Gardeners, 7 pm. Watch for emails with info.
October 24: Macon-Shelby Master Gardener meeting, 7 pm, Extension Center.
Spring 2012: Master Gardener training will be held in Macon. More information will be available in the January issue.

Jennifer Schutter, University of Missouri Extension Horticulture Specialist
503 E. Northtown Road, Kirksville, MO 63501-1999
schutterjl@missouri.edu 660-665-9866