



MEDIA RELEASE

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MARKET DEVELOPMENT DIVISION

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PICKING PUMPKINS TO LAST ALL FALL

NASHVILLE, Tenn. - Pumpkins are temporary treasures. If you know how to spot good pumpkins, you can get the most out of your purchases. The shape or size of a pumpkin has no bearing on how long it will last, but there are other strong indicators.

First off, you know that part of the pumpkin commonly referred to as a handle? Well, it isn't. It's the stem, and you should look for pumpkins with stems that are still green, firmly attached to the pumpkin, and at the very least, one or two inches long. A stem that's already brown and withered, coming off or absent from the fruit, or even just cut too close will leave your pumpkin vulnerable to the elements. A pumpkin with a stem that has already fallen off is an indicator that the pumpkin is already beginning the process of breaking down.

That's why you should never pick up or carry a pumpkin by the stem, even though it seems natural to do. If you detach the stem from the pumpkin, you've affected its longevity. It should go without saying that a pumpkin that has withering, mold, or any soft spots is already decomposing. Inspect the whole pumpkin carefully before buying it. On the other hand, if a pumpkin still has a touch of green on it, it's fine, and the same goes for warts. Warts on pumpkins are caused by a virus that doesn't cause any harm to the quality of the fruit.

Hybrid varieties with names like Howden and Magic Lantern are uniform, bright orange globes with sturdy dark green handles. Giant varieties like Atlantic Giant or Prizewinner have lots of "curb appeal" and are surprisingly easy to carve. Lumina, Casper and Snowball are smooth-skinned white pumpkins ranging in size from small to medium, good for painting, decorating and cutting.

Another way to prolong the use of your purchase is to paint rather than carve. Several varieties are especially good for those who prefer decorating to decapitating or consuming their produce. L'il Ironsides is a smallish pumpkin with an incredibly tough skin – which gives it an extra long shelf life. The smooth skin is great for painting. Its size and hard shell make it perfect for indoor decorating right on through Thanksgiving. Don't even try to carve it – you're liable to break your knife.

When choosing produce for a large display, use a variety of pumpkin colors, shapes and sizes to guarantee texture and interest. To locate Tennessee pumpkins and other autumn décor, visit www.picktnproducts.org.

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