

## **Selecting the Right Pumpkin For Your Market 2003 Jack-O-Lantern and Pie Pumpkin Variety Trials**

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Pumpkins come in all shapes, sizes and colors these days and sometimes it can be hard to determine which ones are suited for your market. What some retailers are looking for is not what wholesale growers are growing and vice versa. In our experience, wholesale growers are generally looking for a 20 to 30 pound pumpkin or bigger. Although these are popular at retail stands, I believe the 12 to 18 pound pumpkin is also very popular. When it comes to pie pumpkins, there is more consensus between wholesalers and retailers with 2 popular size classes: 6 to 10 pound and 2 to 5 pound fruit. There is also the mini and munchkin class of small ornamental pumpkins in the 1 pound or less that are very popular.

There can be no substitute for first hand experience with what varieties do well at your own farm and market, but variety trial reports can be of help by allowing one to see many different varieties grown under similar conditions. This way, a grower can see and compare varieties to one another and decide which one may work for their particular market. In 2003, we evaluated 15 Jack-O-Lantern types and 11 pie types including industry standards and experimental lines from seed companies and university breeding programs. A Jack-O-Lantern in this trial is described as having a minimum average weight of 12 pounds and is further broken down into small (12 – 15 lbs), medium (16 – 19 lbs), and large (20 lbs +) fruit size. Pie types are those with a maximum average weight of 10 pounds or less. This trial also included one specialty mini pumpkin weighing less than a pound. Total marketable yield and average fruit size can be found in Table 1. Descriptive characteristics such as shape etc., can be found on the next page.

This variety trial was located in Rensselaer County at the Wertman Farm in Melrose, NY, which is about 15 miles east of Albany. Plants were seeded in the greenhouse on June 5, 2003 in 48 cell packs. The selected field was marked using a water wheel transplanter on six foot centers with four foot in row spacing and planted by hand on June 24, 2003. Each plot contained 2 rows with 10 plants per row for a total of 20 plants per plot, which was replicated twice for a total of 40 plants per variety. Initial transplant growth was very slow and was associated to very hot dry weather at the time of planting. As seen by the “Number of Plants Harvested” column in Table 1, transplant survival for most varieties was not 100%. In mid July, plants were sidedressed with 300 lbs per acre of urea. The fertilizer with the addition of some rainfall improved plant vigor and vines started to close in the rows. This trial received two systemic fungicide applications in late August tank mixed with a protectant. Plots were harvested on October 10, 2003.

Wholesalers, retailers, u-pick operations etc. are all in the market for the perfect pumpkin. But what is the perfect pumpkin? We hope the information in this report can be of help, but remember that first hand experience with a variety on your own farm is still the most important trial of all. Don't be afraid to try something new, but I recommend starting out with your own

small trial and taking good notes not just yield and fruit characteristics, but how it sells once it gets to your market.

### **Jack-O-Lanterns:**

**Aladdin** (115\*): newer pumpkin variety (was HMX 6689) that is overall very attractive - large fruited, mostly tall to round tall in shape with a beautiful, very dark-burnt orange color, slight to moderate ribbing - a long, but thin handle that is slightly rubbery, may be too small for the size of fruit – variety also has Powdery Mildew tolerance

**Gold Medal** (90): decent yielding attractive large pumpkin that is mostly tall round, nice dark orange color with numerous, moderate to deep ribs – handles are thick, well anchored and appropriately sized for this fruit.

**Gold Gem** (100): decent yielding pumpkin, slightly larger than Howden, mostly round to tall round shape and good dark orange color and a bumpy appearance to skin, moderate ribbing and fairly strong, well anchored handles.

**Gold Standard** (90): very uniform, medium sized fruit are mostly round squat with a very attractive dark orange color, uniform medium ribbing, with long, thick, well anchored strong handles that tend to hold their green color for quite a while.

**Howden** (100): this is still regarded as the industry standard for Jack-O-Lanterns and is still one of the most commonly grown varieties – fruit are large, shape is variable, mostly being tall rounds with some round squats occasionally – medium to dark orange color with medium to deep ribs - handles are thick and well anchored.

**Howdy Doody** (90): attractive medium sized Jack-O-Lantern that is variable in shape from tall round to squat round with a medium to dark orange color – most have slight to medium rib and short to medium length handles that are strong and well anchored.

**Magic Lantern** (115): very attractive – medium-large fruit - excellent yielding, mostly tall to round tall in shape with a beautiful, very dark-burnt orange color, slight to moderate ribbing – handles are long, but thin that is slightly rubbery – smaller version of Aladdin – variety also has Powdery Mildew tolerance.

**NH 1757** (na): small sized Jack-O-Lantern that looks very similar to Racer – very attractive dark orange color, round squat shape with medium to deep ribs – dark green, medium long thick handles that are well anchored.

**NH 1765** (na): large warted fruit that are mostly tall round with dark orange color and medium to deep ribbing – handles are very thick, strong and well anchored – excellent looking variety except for the large bumps or warts on the fruit – they do turn orange but maybe a negative overall for the variety

**Racer** (85): very uniform, very attractive medium sized fruit, mostly round round to squat round with a dark orange to burnt orange color – handles are long, very thick, well anchored and very sturdy – excellent yielder, color, stems and uniformity – also has a restricted vine growth habit and is quick to mature.

**RPX 03508** (na): large fruited variety that are mostly tall rounds – color is variable from yellowish orange to medium dark orange and medium ribbing – handles were thin, dried up and brittle – poor handle quality overall.

**RPX 03512** (na): medium large Jack-O-Lantern with a very attractive shape – mostly round tall with variable color, medium orange - and medium ribbing – handles were thick well anchored and well sized for the fruit but dried up and brittle.

**RPX 03511** (na): small to medium sized Jack-O-Lantern with a round shape – medium to dark orange color, medium orange color and medium ribbing – handles were thick well anchored and well sized for the fruit but dried up and brittle.

**Sorcerer** (115): very attractive – medium-large fruit - mostly tall to round tall in shape with a beautiful, very dark-burnt orange color, slight to moderate ribbing – handles are long, but thin that is slightly rubbery – very similar to Magic Lantern, but no Powdery Mildew tolerance.

**Trojan** (110): potential for very large Jack-O-Lanterns, but variable in shape and size – med orange color with medium ribs – mostly tall shaped fruit – handles are thick, but become somewhat brittle when dried

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### **Pie Pumpkin Types**

**Baby Pam** (100): very attractive and uniform – productive, 2 to 3 pound fruit – round squat in shape and medium to dark orange color – handles are long and nicely sized for the size of the fruit – handles are also durable even when dried down – has a slight to medium rib.

**Hybrid Pam** (90): very attractive and productive medium large pie with exceptional dark orange color – shape is round squat, but is somewhat tall as well - medium deep ribs - has a long, thick, well anchored, strong, dark green stem – one of the nicest pie types in the trial. This variety is also a restricted vine type.

**Mystic Plus** (105): very attractive large pie type with a unique dark burnt orange color with slight to medium ribbing – round but tall shape but is somewhat unique because it is more rounded at the top than others - handles generally remain dark green and are long and thick.

**NH 1754** (na): very attractive large pie pumpkin type – almost a small Jack-O-Lantern – very uniform, dark orange color with medium deep ribs – handles are very short but dark green, very strong and well anchored.

**NH 1759** (na): excellent yielder and attractive, but hard to determine where it belongs – could go as either a large pie or a small Jack-O-Lantern – similar to NH 1754 - dark orange color, round squat shape, medium to deep ribs and a short, strong, well anchored dark green stem.

**NH 1755** (na): medium sized pie with dark orange color with numerous but slight ribs – handles are very short, but very thick, strong and well anchored and stay a dark green color – has good potential for a 4 to 5 pound pie pumpkin.

**NH 1770** (na): very attractive and uniform large pie type fruit with dark orange color and deep numerous ribbing, with a high round squat shape – short, strong, dark green handles that are again well anchored.

**NH 1771** (na): very attractive, productive and uniform pie type fruit slightly smaller than NH 1770 - dark orange color and deep numerous ribbing, with a round squat shape – short, strong, dark green handles that are again well anchored.

**Orange Smoothie** (90): very unique pie type in that the shell is very smooth with very little ribbing – excellent for painting – stems are short and dry down to a tan color, but remain strong – has a light orange color that can have a slight roughness to the touch – generally round in shape and quite productive.

**Spooktacular** (85): very similar to Baby Pam in size, shape and color – very productive and fairly uniform – medium to dark orange color with a slight to medium rib – handles are much shorter compared to Baby Pam, but are strong and dry to a tan color – very attractive.

**Trickster** (85): small pie type that is very productive, yielding dark orange fruit with slight to medium ribbing – fruit are squat round with long, thin handles, well suited for the size of the fruit- very attractive.

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### **Specialty Mini Pumpkin:**

**RPX 03102** (na): very similar to Wee-Be-Little- small specialty type mini pumpkin – light orange to yellow in color with a slight rib – handles are short and actually quite thick for the size of the fruit – shape is more tall round than round squat- had a fair number of green striped fruit.

\* Numbers in parenthesis are the relative days to harvest as given by the seed companies when available

Table 1 : 2003 Jack-O-Lantern and Pie Pumpkin Yields.				ADDENDUM: BORNT				
Variety	Source	Days to Harvest	Total # of Plants Harvested	Total # Marketable Fruit	Marketable Fruit Weight (lbs)	Average Fruit size (lbs)	Average # Fruit per Plant	Yield per Plant (lbs)
<b>Pie and Specialty Pumpkin Types</b>								
<b>RPX 03102</b>	Rupp Seeds	na	16	78	72.2	0.93	4.88	4.51
<b>TRICKSTER</b>	Rupp Seeds	85	39	128	300.4	2.35	3.28	7.70
<b>SPOOKTACULAR</b>	Rupp Seeds	85	16	34	99.25	2.92	2.13	6.20
<b>BABY PAM</b>	Rupp Seeds	100	25	65	190.8	2.94	2.60	7.63
<b>ORANGE SMOOTHIE</b>	Rupp Seeds	90	36	100	409.3	4.09	2.78	11.37
<b>NH 1755</b>	Univ. New Hampshire	na	17	36	158.7	4.41	2.12	9.34
<b>HYBRID PAM</b>	Seedway	90	30	67	305.35	4.56	2.23	10.18
<b>MYSTIC PLUS</b>	Harris Moran	105	32	61	345.35	5.66	1.91	10.79
<b>NH 1771</b>	Univ. New Hampshire	na	10	14	121.3	8.66	1.40	12.13
<b>NH 1770</b>	Univ. New Hampshire	na	23	38	386.65	10.18	1.65	16.81
<b>NH 1759</b>	Univ. New Hampshire	na	19	48	521.4	10.86	2.53	27.44
<b>NH 1754</b>	Univ. New Hampshire	na	18	18	202.6	11.26	1.00	11.26
<b>Jack-O-Lantern Types</b>								
<b>NH 1757</b>	Univ. New Hampshire	na	20	30	372.75	12.43	1.50	18.64
<b>RACER</b>	Johnny's	80	33	58	733.7	12.65	1.76	22.23
<b>RPX 03511</b>	Rupp Seeds	na	32	30	410.55	13.69	0.94	12.83
<b>GOLD STANDARD</b>	Rupp Seeds	90	21	25	347.65	13.91	1.19	16.55
<b>HOWDY DOODY</b>	Rupp Seeds	90	12	12	175.15	14.60	1.00	14.60
<b>RPX 03512</b>	Rupp Seeds	na	27	32	480.85	15.03	1.19	17.81
<b>SORCERER</b>	Harris Moran	115	32	41	637.6	15.55	1.28	19.93
<b>MAGIC LANTERN</b>	Harris Moran	115	23	37	662.05	17.89	1.61	28.78
<b>HOWDEN</b>	Harris Moran	100	25	26	509.65	19.60	1.04	20.39
<b>NH 1765</b>	Univ. New Hampshire	na	12	23	482.7	20.99	1.92	40.23
<b>ALADDIN</b>	Harris Moran	115	18	17	357.5	21.03	0.94	19.86
<b>GOLD GEM</b>	Rupp Seeds	100	22	29	626.75	21.61	1.32	28.49
<b>RPX 03508</b>	Rupp Seeds	na	18	22	507.45	23.07	1.22	28.19
<b>TROJAN</b>	Seedway	110	22	22	558.2	25.37	1.00	25.37
<b>GOLD MEDAL</b>	Rupp Seeds	90	30	18	627.85	34.88	0.60	20.93
We would like to thank our trial host Rich and Debbie Wertman of Wertman Farms, Melrose, NY and the above seed companies for their support. Varieties were seeded in the greenhouse on June 5, 2003 in 48 cell packs, field planted on June 24, 2003 and harvested on October 8 and 10, 2003.								