

**Sales Trends and New Pumpkins from Johnny's Selected Seeds**  
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Pumpkins are a MUST-HAVE crop if you market your produce direct to consumers (e.g. farm stands or farmers' markets) or wholesale to grocery stores. Knowing what your customers want for a pumpkin is also a necessity. Here at Johnny's, we select for the traits your market demands. Around the country and here in the Northeast we're seeing the direct marketing growers use specialty pumpkins (i.e. Long Island Cheese, Moonshine, Knucklehead) to draw customers into their stand and sell mostly Jack-o'-lantern pumpkins. Typical size range customers are looking for is the 14-20# types with nice, dark, orange color and deep ribbing with a strong, green handle. Other trends are the decorative, heirloom pumpkins that can be stacked (including Jarrahdale, Valenciano, and Musque de Provence) and pie pumpkins that can double as "kid" sized pumpkins (including Baby Pam and Baby Bear).

Breeding programs here in the Northeast and around the country are selecting for the above traits with different shaped pumpkins (i.e. upright and tall vs. round with high shoulders). Johnny's and many other breeding programs select for disease resistance. The main disease resistances that are the most important for New England growers are Powdery Mildew, Phytophthora and Viruses.

Breeding for Powdery Mildew Resistance (PMR) is important to pumpkin crops to protect the quality of the pumpkins, including allowing them to size-up, keeping the handles strong with good green color and aiding in the post-harvest appearance during transporting and retailing. Some genes for PMR are stronger than others, giving the pumpkins different levels of resistance. Some can be resistant but under heavy PM infection the leaves succumb to the disease but the stems (handles) and vines don't, keeping the pumpkin healthy.

Phytophthora shows up under rainy conditions in September combined with poorly drained soils when the fruit is ripening. There are currently no Phytophthora resistant varieties on the market.

Viruses are a problem that comes and goes here in the Northeast. There is one virus resistant variety on the market currently. That is Harris Moran's Magician, which is resistant to Zucchini Yellow Mosaic Virus. Presently, the Johnny's breeding program is not breeding for any virus resistance.

The 2009 season was a tough pumpkin growing season with the cold, wet conditions here in the Northeast. Pumpkin crops that fared better than others were crops grown on poly mulch to keep soil temps higher in the colder weather, started with transplants to give the plants a head start, used row covers to increase air temperature around the plants and used early growing varieties, such as Racer from Johnny's, which matures in 85 days. Growers with crops that grew the best employed more of these techniques.

NEW PUMPKINS from the Johnny's Selected Seeds breeding program have been released! Racer Plus PMR is an early Racer-type (85 days) with intermediate resistance to PM. It has a burnt orange color and a nice handle like Racer. Champion is a large Jack-o'-lantern that is 25-45 pounds depending on the weather, soil and plant spacing. It is a bright, deep orange, deep ribbed, upright, tall and has a big handle. Maturity is 90 days, which is earlier than other big Jack-o'-lantern pumpkins. For more information and price and availability of these varieties and more please go to [www.johnnyseeds.com](http://www.johnnyseeds.com).