

## **Making Ripples**

by Amanda Bancroft

There may be no greater sign of the season than the appearance of pumpkins popping up everywhere: on front porches, in store displays, on television and in classrooms. Even cute puppies and children may transform into pumpkins for a Halloween costume. They are resilient fruits, with thick skins and a naturally long storage life for most varieties. Wouldn't it be nice if we all had some of those positive pumpkin-like qualities?

Pumpkins are native to North America, with the oldest known seeds originating in Mexico between 7,000 and 5,500 BC. Squash was a more important dietary staple for indigenous peoples and early settlers. The "Three Sisters" is a form of companion planting practiced by Native Americans and some farmers today, growing squash along with corn and beans. Corn provides a natural trellis for the beans to grow on. The bean roots nourish the corn by adding nitrogen to the soil. On windy days, the bean vines stabilize the corn stalks. The big-leaved squash plants shelter the shallow roots of the corn, and shade the ground to preserve moisture and discourage weeds from growing.

Today it's more common to enjoy pumpkin picking and carving than it is to rely on them for food. According to [AllAboutPumpkins.com](http://AllAboutPumpkins.com), you can't help but smile when looking at a pumpkin. "I've always thought that we don't choose pumpkins. They choose us! There is an unwritten magical connection when you find the perfect pumpkin," explains Jack Creek Farms, a fifth generation family farm in California. There are hundreds of varieties of pumpkins with personality, including: Wee-Be-Little, Long Island Cheese, Neon, Aladdin, Baby Bear, Red Warty Thing, Rock Star, Jack-Be-Little and Jack-Be-Quick, Iron Man and Cinderella, a French variety used by the illustrator of that fairy tale.

Local pumpkin picking options include popular Dickey Farms pumpkin patch near Tontitown (479) 442-4427, Legacy Farms in Fayetteville (479) 790-3457 which has a hay ride and more, or Farmland Adventures in Springdale (479) 799-5033 which offers a corn maze and more.

This week will be the last time the Making Ripples column will be read in print. Starting in November, The Free Weekly will only be available online. Going paperless is an increasingly common choice, and I encourage everyone to consider making some ripples by embracing this eco-friendly option. If internet is not accessible to you, libraries such as the Fayetteville Public Library offer access to guests without a library card and patrons with a card. The column will be linked every week to the Ripples Facebook page where we also post updates about our off-grid tiny house, and the natural history of Kessler Mountain (everything from cute chipmunks to photos from over one hundred years ago). Follow our journey at: [Facebook.com/RipplesBlog](https://Facebook.com/RipplesBlog)

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