



** This news release from K-State Research and Extension is available online at <https://ksre-learn.com/preserving-halloween-pumpkins>

Released: Oct. 17, 2024

Picking and Preserving the Perfect Pumpkin

K-State horticulture expert shares tips for extending the life of carved pumpkins

By Pat Melgares, K-State Research and Extension news service

MANHATTAN, Kan. – Pumpkins are a popular fall decoration this time of year, not to mention the joy of jack-o-lanterns, a Halloween favorite.

Kansas State University horticulture expert Cynthia Domenghini suggests harvesting or purchasing pumpkins that are fully ripened in order to increase their longevity.

“Pumpkins that are harvested before they fully ripen will rot more quickly than those harvested at peak maturity,” Domenghini said.

She adds:

- A mature pumpkin will have a hard rind that is solid in color.
- The pumpkin should make a hollow sound when thumped.
- Mature pumpkins will have a waxy coating, which protects them from drying out.

After harvesting pumpkins, keep them cool and out of sunlight to extend their life.

“Carved pumpkins have a much shorter shelf-life, sometimes only a few days up to a week, before noticeable rotting occurs,” Domenghini said.

To extend the life of carved pumpkins:

- Clean the inside thoroughly, removing all seeds and loose string.
- Soak the inside of the pumpkin in a 10% bleach-water solution for several hours.
- Avoid using a real candle inside the pumpkin, since the heat speeds up rotting.
- If there’s a freeze in the forecast, bring your jack-o-lantern inside; pumpkins have a high concentration of water.

Domenghini and her colleagues in K-State's Department of Horticulture and Natural Resources produce a [weekly Horticulture Newsletter](#) with tips for maintaining home landscapes and gardens.

Interested persons can subscribe to the newsletter, as well as send their garden and yard-related questions to hortsupport@ksu.edu, or contact your [local K-State Research and Extension office](#).

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Sidebar: Question of the Week

We had to have a large limb removed from a tree in our yard after it experienced storm damage. Can the remainder of the tree be saved?

We receive questions regularly about whether or not a damaged tree should be removed or saved. This is not surprising since most homeowners recognize the value trees bring to their landscape, and the time required for a tree to reach maturity.

In most cases, [your local extension agent](#) is going to recommend contacting a certified arborist to evaluate the safety of the remainder of the tree, especially if it is in an area where there are frequently people present, or if structures are nearby. Safety is the priority.

Trees can be resilient if the damage is not too extensive. However, even if it is a resilient tree, a wound puts it under stress, making it susceptible to disease and pests.

If the tree is not in an area where it is causing a risk to nearby structures or people, there's nothing wrong with giving it a chance to survive. If it is a safety risk, then removal is the best option. With either decision, consider planting a replacement as soon as possible to fill in the canopy over time.

-- Cynthia Domenghini, K-State horticulture expert, Cdom@ksu.edu

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FOR PRINT PUBLICATIONS: Links used in this story

K-State Horticulture Newsletter, <https://hnr.k-state.edu/extension/info-center/newsletters/index.html>

K-State Research and Extension local offices, <https://www.ksre.k-state.edu/about/statewide-locations.html>

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