



STAFF PHOTO/SJOERD WITTEVEEN

Steve (left) and Tony Hoult unload pumpkins from the patch at their farm on Hwy. 48 north of Ballantrae. It was a good year for pumpkins.

Picking perfect pumpkin easy this year

Wet summer creates bumper crop

BY TERESA LATCHFORD
Staff Writer

Every year, the hunt begins.

Families pile into their cars and head to a grocery store or nearby farm in search of the perfect pumpkin to carve and set on the front stoop Halloween night.

But, this year, you may not have to search too hard to find "the one".

This summer was the perfect growing season for pumpkins, says Paul Brooks of Brooks Farm in Mount Albert.

"There is no magic to it," he says. "We had a lot of sun and a lot of rain this summer."

Pumpkins are 90 per cent water and need vast amounts of moisture to grow to a good size. The sun helps stimulate

growth and ripens the fruit over time.

June produced almost 79 millimetres of precipitation, eight more than the average.

In contrast, the Greater Toronto Area only receiving an average of about 30 millimetres of rain in June 2007, making it a difficult growing season for all crops.

"Last year, it was a drought," says Pam Rolph-Romeril of Pine Farms Orchard and Fruit Winery in King. "There wasn't enough water for anything really."

Although too much water extends the time it takes for pumpkins to be ready to harvest, it is better than too little rain, she adds.

Usually pumpkins are ready in the middle of September, but this year, it was at the end of the month, Ms Rolph-Romeril says.

Not only are the pump-

kins larger and more vibrant in colour this year, there are more of them, Mr. Brooks says.

And having more from which to choose makes the hunt easier for picky pumpkin shoppers.

"I haven't quite figured out the mystery of the perfect pumpkin," he smiles. "You can drop someone off in the best part of the pumpkin patch and they will wander a mile away from it."

He has come to assume a certain type of pumpkin calls to a certain person. Some look for perfectly round specimens, others want tall and flat and still others search our small ones.

"When kids come to the farm, I tell them to just listen while picking out their

pumpkin," Mr. Brooks said.

There are some rules of thumb when it comes to knowing when a pumpkin is ready.

The stem should be a little dry, but strong enough to pick up the pumpkin. There should be no green patches and it should be firm, not squishy which is a sure sign it is rotting.

When carving, don't be afraid to experiment. Mr. Brooks has carved with a knife, a special tool set and even a chainsaw.

"Carving has become an art (but) I prefer the traditional jack-o-lantern face," Mr. Brooks says. "To me, it just says Halloween."

Mrs. Rolph-Romeril has student carve the pumpkins at her farm. But for them, the perfect pump-

kins are the imperfect ones as they provide character

DID YOU KNOW?

- ▶ Pumpkins are 90 per cent water.
- ▶ In early colonial times, pumpkins were used as an ingredient for pies crusts, not the filling.
- ▶ They range in size from less than one pound to 1,000 lbs.
- ▶ Pumpkins were once recommended for removing freckles and curing snake bites.
- ▶ Pumpkin originated from pepon, the Greek word for large melon.

CARVING CAPERS

- ▶ When cutting out the lid, make a small notch to help you replace it properly and let out some of the tea light heat.
- ▶ Use a washable marker to draw your design before cutting.
- ▶ Get creative. To give your creation a nice glow, don't cut right through when carving, simply peel off the skin so light shines through the inner core.

CLEANING UP

- ▶ Put it in the compost heap as it will make rich fertilizer.
- ▶ Bury it in the garden to enrich soil.
- ▶ Wash, dry and save the seeds to plant next year.
- ▶ Put it in the green bin if you don't have a garden.
- ▶ Never eat or cook with a pumpkin that has been carved and outside all night.

APPOINTMENTS TO YORK REGION TRANSIT MOBILITY PLUS ELIGIBILITY APPEAL PANEL

The Regional Municipality of York invites applications from individuals who are interested in serving as panel members on the York Region Transit Mobility Plus Eligibility Appeal Panel for a term not to exceed four years.

York Region Transit Mobility Plus is a specialized shared-ride public transit service reserved for those persons who, due to physical or functional limitations, are unable to access conventional transit services. The York Region Transit Mobility Plus Eligibility Appeal Panel is a three member panel established to hear appeals from persons who have been determined to be ineligible to receive Mobility Plus service. Appointees are being sought to join the Manager of Mobility Plus on the Appeal Panel, as follows:

- Disabled Community Representative
- Medical Health Practitioner

To be eligible for appointment to the Appeal Panel, you must be either a person with a disability, or be a Medical Doctor, Registered Nurse, Registered Physiotherapist, or a Registered Social Worker. You must also be a current resident of York Region, a Canadian citizen and at least 18 years of age.

Candidates must have the ability to meet at least once a month, including during business hours. Preference will be given to applicants who have a demonstrated history of community service in York Region.

Interested applicants are encouraged to review the Mobility Plus web site at www.yrt.ca for more information regarding this service.

Individuals interested in serving the York Region community in this capacity should contact the Regional Clerk's office to receive a York Region Mobility Plus Appeal Panel Application Form at 905-830-4444, ext. 1320.

Applications will be accepted until Friday, November 7, 2008.

Learning Disabilities?

If you or your child suffers from LEARNING DISABILITIES then attending this free symposium may be the most important thing you do this year. You will discover the true cause of these conditions and natural solutions and options you can use right away to overcome them.

Many children and adults with ADD and Dyslexia have seen significant improvement without medication. Dr. Turner is an international speaker and lecturer who has been featured on the *Dini Petty Show*, *National News*, *Canada AM*, *CFTO News*, *Marilyn Denis CITYLINE* and *Riley Live*. He will present a free symposium on Thurs. Oct. 30th at 7:30 pm at the Stouffville Health Centre, 6219 Main Street.

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