

Pumpkins

Growing and Marketing the Crop

Chris Creed

RSK ADAS Horticulture

Introduction

- Horticulture adviser in ADAS
- 40 years experience
- Specialised in soft fruit, farm retail, more recently vegetables
- Pumpkins
- Rhubarb
- Farm tourism

Pumpkins as a Crop

- Currently working with 20+ farms
- England and Wales
- Supermarket supply, wholesale and PYO
- Useful introduction to farm tourism
- Summer crop



Variety Choices

- Picking varieties
- Main seed houses
- Moles and Kings for smaller quantities
- PYO big range needed
- Supermarket and wholesale depends on specifications



| Size Guide | Variety | Type | Supplier | Weight Estimate | |
|----------------|--------------|---------------|-----------|-----------------|-------|
| Monster | Kratos | Halloween (H) | Clause UK | >10kg | |
| | Captain Jack | H | Sakata | >10 kg | |
| | Gold Medal | H | Tozer | >8 kg | |
| | Champion | H | Tozer | >8 kg | |
| | Large Marge | H | Sakata | 12kg | |
| | Mr Wrinkles | H | Sakata | 12 kg | |
| | Early King | H | Moles | 12kg | |
| | Polar Bear | White | Tozer | >8kg | |
| | Diablo | H | Sakata | 8kg | |
| | Earlipack | H | Sakata | 8kg | |
| | Wicked | H | Moles | 8kg | |
| | Large | Magic Lantern | H | Clause | 7kg |
| | | Racer | H | Tozer | 5-7kg |
| Gladiator | | H | Clause | 5-6 kg | |
| Mrs Wrinkles | | H | Sakata | 7kg | |

| Size Guide | Variety | Type | Supplier | Weight Estimate |
|----------------|-----------------|-----------|----------|-----------------|
| Medium | Magician | H | Clause | 3-4kg |
| | Gomez | H | Clause | 3-4 kg |
| | Cargo | H | Tozer | 3-4kg |
| | White flat Boer | White | Sakata | 4kg |
| | Bellatrix | H | Enza | 4kg |
| | Mars | H | Tozer | 2-4 kg |
| | Harvest Moon | H | CN | 4-5kg |
| Small and mini | Spitfire | Mini (m) | Clause | 1kg |
| | Full splendour | M | Sakata | 2kg |
| | Jack Sprat | M | Sakata | 1-2kg |
| Warts | Toad | Warty (W) | Sakata | 1kg |
| | Goosebumps | W | Tozer | 2kg |
| | Warty Gnome | W | Clause | 2kg |
| | Warty Goblin | W | Clause | 2 kg |
| | Knuckle head | W | Moles | 5-7kg |

Sowing Dates and Target Density

Planning & Ordering Seed

- 10,000 -12,500 plants per Ha
- 5000 per acre
- Modules will take 3-4 weeks under protection
- Direct drill

Planting and Sowing Dates:

Likely to be around 20th May if the weather is good enough

20th June getting too late, needs a good summer



Soil Preparation and Feeding

- Crop wants low N or will grow too vegetatively
- pH 6.5
- P&K Index 3
- RB209 use with care
- No analysis 400 kg ha 10-10-20 type
- If P is high Knitro type



Drill or Plant

- Drilling easier mostly use adapted vacuum maize drills
- Big scale mostly drilled
- Plants for smaller and challenging sites
- Weed control can be easier with plants
- Grow your own or buy in.
- Water only needed to establish
- Don't drill in dust
- Straight after planting if dry



Weed Control England and Wales

Stale Seed Bed

- Roundup

Residuals

- Gamit 0.25 L/Ha
- Kerb
- Flexidor 500 ml/ha

Directed residuals

- Wing P – some reports of damage

Directed Contacts

- Finalsan
- Shark
- Hoeing hand and mechanical



Spapperi Inter-Plant Weeder -

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6nxT-2RsyTk>

Disease Control

- Powdery Mildew
- Control until August?
- Crop damage
- Wide spectrum fungicides
- Field rots
- Calcium foliar feeds may help
- Storage rots



Pollination

- Bees and other insects
- Male and female flowers
- Delayed female flowers with too much N
- Hives rarely needed
- Set in July most years

Male with no Ovary



Female with Ovary

Marketing

Small 1-2kg £1.00 - £1.50

Medium 3-5 kg £2.00 - £4.00

Large 5-8 kg £5.00 - £8.00

Monsters 10kg and over £10 plus

Some farms do £1.00 - £7.00/kg max

Wheelbarrows bigger the better

**Area where a lot of money can
be won or lost.**



Pumpkin storage

Wholesale and supermarket

- Ideally get off the field as soon as orange
- Put in glasshouses, tunnels, dutch barns etc dry and warm
- Do when dry if you can
- Never store cold ideal is 25⁰c +
- Don't wash pre store wipe down with dry sack etc only
- Field storage can give a lot of rots if wet August onwards
- Supermarket pallet containers can be rejected if muddy
- Some farms cut vines to aid ripening

PYO

- Put some in a barn especially if orange early
- Some farms sell them all from barns etc
- If September is dry and warm then there is unlikely to be a problem
- Field access with barrows can be part of the experience
- Infrastructure and parking
- Pressure washer available if muddy

Adding Value

- Catering
- Pop ups
- Carving schools
- Trailer rides
- Other crops
- Infrastructure



In Field Payments

- Card payments quick, easy and covid-friendly.
- Many apps available with supporting tech – linked with mobiles or tablets
- Low charges (c. 1.75%)
- Quick to set up and install



Booking Systems

- Give customers a fixed time slot
- Came with Covid now standard
- Manage footfall on site
- Match customers with available fruit
- Avoid congestion on roads & car parks
- Charge a redeemable fee for booking
- Advertise booking needs



Any more Questions?

