

https://www.winchesterstar.com/winchester_star/now-that-halloween-is-over-give-your-pumpkins-a-last-hoorah/article_ae21335a-b967-5a03-8a97-0f837b1b2c5f.html

HOT CENTERPIECE

Now that Halloween is over, give your pumpkins a last hoorah

By KRISTA G. FARRIS Special to The Winchester Star

Nov 2, 2022

1 of 3



Chickens at Skyview Acres in Frederick County peck on a donated pumpkin. Many farms in the area will accept unwanted pumpkins (that are paint, chemical and mold free) to feed to their livestock.

Prov

Before you pick up that crooked-toothed jack o' lantern from your porch and toss it in the trash,

why not explore four different ways you can keep the spirit of that wily, round thing around. If you have more than one pumpkin to get rid of, try all four ideas. You might discover a new, fun annual fall tradition to look forward to each year.

Feed the piggies

If you have a friend who farms, ask them if you can feed some of their animals for a festive fall adventure. Pumpkins for Pigs is a nationwide program with a local presence that is focused on matching farm and sanctuary animals who eat uncarved, paint-free, mold-free pumpkins with people who want to keep seasonal refuse out of the landfill. Details about the organization can be found at pumpkinsforpigs.org.

There are two Winchester area farms that participate in the program. Josh and Dayna Geraghty own Geraghty's Micro Farm in Frederick County at 1659 Apple Pie Ridge Road. Dayna invites people to bring their pumpkins, produce gourds and acorns to the farm to feed to the pigs. The Geraghty's Micro Farm Market is open noon-4 p.m. on Sundays. In addition, the farm has a community supported agriculture group (CSA).

"All our pigs love pumpkins and will come running when they see visitors with them. You'll be greeted with loud grunts and the pigs also accept some scratches. A fan favorite is our pigs that are about 3 to 4 months old, but we allow visitors to pick which pigs they want to feed," Dayna says.

As far as Dayna is concerned, the farm can use all the pumpkins it receives. She estimates they got close to a ton last year and notes that once the weather cools, pumpkins keep very well outside so that they can mete them out to the pigs. "We are adamant about not letting things go to waste. These products would normally end up in the landfill," Dayna says. In addition, Geraghty's Micro Farm has a large flock of egg laying hens that enjoy pumpkins, gourds and acorns.

If you don't want to feed the pigs yourself, you can drop off your pumpkins, produce gourds and acorns behind the sign at the end of their driveway. More information about Geraghty's Micro Farm, produce drop-off and the farm animals can be found at gmicrofarm.com.

Skyview Acres farm, located at 2737 Senseny Road in Frederick County, is also part of the Pumpkins for Pigs program. Owners Greg and Sharon Mauzy say folks can drop off pumpkins, squash, gourds, walnuts, fresh fruit and garden leftovers by the tree at the end of their driveway

any time they want. They feed the donations to their pigs, chickens and turkeys. Sharon says they accept just about any fresh fruit or vegetable. However, she says they don't accept kitchen waste or, like the Geraghtys, pumpkins that have paint, chlorine or anything else on them that might endanger farm animals.

"We love this time of year when people drop off pumpkins," Sharon says. "It's like Christmas every day." Skyview Acres sells meat and honey locally at Solenberger's Hardware Store in Winchester once or twice a month. It also offers products via its website [skyviewfarming.com](https://www.skyviewfarming.com) and through its CSA.

Have a smashing time

Have you ever had the urge to see your pumpkin drop from a 40-foot lift? Have you ever wanted to send your jack o' lantern to meet its demise by attaching it to a zip line and letting it crash at the other end? What about watching it shoot out of a cannon or hurling it off the top of a silo? Great Country Farms on Snickersville Turnpike in Bluemont gives you the chance to release whatever it is that gives you the urge to smash your pumpkins to smithereens at its Pumpkin Chunkin' Festival this Saturday and Sunday from 10 a.m.-5 p.m.

The Pumpkin Chunkin' Festival launched more than 20 years ago and was a smashing success. Whether the big orange squash are shattered on the "Pumpkin Wall of Death" or in the drop zone, the remnants of the orbs will be gathered together and added to the farm's compost to enrich next year's crops or fed to some lucky animals that will feast on the haul.

If a little pumpkin destruction is what you need to relieve a little stress as fall ends and the busy Thanksgiving and winter holiday season begins, visit [greatcountryfarms.com](https://www.greatcountryfarms.com) for details. Tickets cost \$16 for adults and \$14 for children.

Compost now for a verdant spring

Pumpkins are a great addition to a compost heap. If you don't yet have a compost bin or pile, Michael Neese, director of recycling for the City of Winchester, says now is a great time to start one. Pumpkins coupled with the fall leaves provide a good compost base, and it will keep both off your curb. He suggests cutting your pumpkins into small pieces before adding to your compost. "The smaller the pieces the faster it will compost, bearing in mind things compost slower in the cold," Neese says. Seeds should be removed before composting, unless you want them to sprout.

If you are starting a new compost pile, Neese suggests locating it near your house so that you don't have to walk too far to get to it during the cold months ahead. And, he says, be patient. Decomposition doesn't happen overnight. But, starting now should mean that you will have ample, rich compost to use in your garden by the time spring rolls around.

If starting a compost system sounds too overwhelming, don't fret. Neese says you can remove seeds, fill the pumpkin with dirt and just bury it. It will decay and all that lives in the soil will love it.

Ignore it

That's right. Toss your pumpkin in a corner of your yard and see what happens. If it contains a seed or two and conditions are right, the flesh will rot and you might be treated to a surprise next fall (your own pumpkin vines). However, if you want to increase the chances of having pumpkin babies, you can be a little bit less lazy and more intentional about it (but just a little bit).

"If the pumpkins are whole, a hole in the top can be cut then filled with compost, dirt or potting soil. The entire thing can then be buried in the garden to grow more pumpkins," Neese says. Once the pumpkin is set in place, don't touch it. It will break down on its own and, hopefully, provide you with the good kind of October surprise next year.