

Wholesaling Pumpkins 101

Richard Lyon

Demand

- There is a big demand for wholesale pumpkins simply because fewer and fewer people are growing them. If you are going to wholesale pumpkins you need to be as much of a one stop shop as possible. You can't grow everything, but you should have at least 8-12 different varieties for your customers to choose from. Pumpkins are a difficult crop to grow in the south mainly because our heat and humidity put extra stress on the plant and allows disease to move in easily. Since you are wholesaling, your price per pumpkin will obviously be greatly reduced, so you have to watch your costs everywhere.

Budgeting (35- 36" bin boxes per acre)

<u>Gross revenue</u>	(35 x \$120.00)	\$4200.00
<u>Expenses</u>		
- Land rent		\$100
- Ground Preparation		\$60
- Lime		\$20
- Fertilizer (100-120-120, 3u Boron, 3u Zinc)		\$150
- Seed (2,000sd @\$85 per M)		\$170
- Planting		\$15
- Spray pre-emerge		\$30
- Spray post emerge		\$25
- Spot spray		\$50
- Spraying fungicides and insecticides(5x)		\$400
- Sprayer cost (5x)		\$50
- Harvest cost (labor)(\$15 per bin)		\$525
- Box and pallet cost (\$17 x 35)		\$595
- Loading cost (labor)(\$5 x 35)		<u>\$175</u>
		<u>\$2365.00</u>
<u>Net Revenue</u>	(\$4200 - \$2365)	\$1835.00

Seed Selection

- Need several varieties of pumpkins to choose from.
 1. Giant (Prizewinner or Atlantic giant)
(6-10 per bin)
 2. Large Jacks (Apollo, Cronus, Big Doris)
(30-35 per bin)
 3. Carving pumpkins (Magic Wand, Gladiator, Camaro)
(50-55 per bin)
 4. Small Pumpkins (Field Trip, Hybrid Pam)
(100-200 per bin, possibility for undersized pumpkins)
 5. Mini Pumpkins (Jack be little, Casperita, Kandy Korn)
(60-70 per box) 11/9 bu. Box
 6. Novelty Pumpkins (Cinderella, Fairytale, Jaradale, Moonshine, One too many, Knucklehead, Porcelain Doll)

Ground Preparation

Whether or work the ground or plant no-till, you need to have your ground ready early. A month in advance is minimum, more is better. This gives weed seed time to germinate and allows you to spray emerged seeds a couple of times before planting. No till is preferred so that the debris will help hold your moisture, control weed germination, and help keep the pumpkins clean.

Planting

In southern Tennessee, you can figure on having pumpkins ready to harvest about 7 days earlier than the packet says because of the heat. This means that you would want to plant just a little later to ensure that your pumpkins don't get ready too soon. Nothing worse than pumpkins in August. I like to start planting around the 20th of June and be finished by the 4th of July. Some varieties like Fairytale, gourds, and porcelain doll will need to be planted end of May. Make multiple plantings so that you have pumpkins available throughout the season. You need everything early, especially novelty stuff, and mainly jacks and field trip pumpkins for later in the season.

Weed Control

Apply pre-emerge directly after planting, but before the seed emerges. Generally you have about 4 days before emergence. I apply 1.5 pints of Reflex and 1.5 pints of Dual magnum. We also spray our row middles with gramoxone with a hooded sprayer and spot spray in between pumpkins with a back pack sprayer with a drift guard on the end of the nozzle. Sandea or Herbivore can be sprayed after 3-4 true leaves have appeared to help with a lot of weeds. White pumpkins and some novelty pumpkins can be very sensitive to pre-emerges so be very careful with your rates and overlapping.

Spraying

A good spray program is probably the most important part about growing pumpkins. **This is not something to skimp on!** In order to have pumpkins to sell your pumpkins must have good stems and be relatively free of scarring from insects. Expect to spend around \$350-\$400 per acre on fungicides and insecticides. Use a lot of water when applying fungicides, it's critical that the leaves are covered thoroughly. I would recommend at least 20 gal. of water per acre when your spraying, we use 40, and could tell a big difference in our quality when we went from 20 – 40 a few years ago. You need to spray every 7-10 days; this of course will vary depending on rainfall. The more it rains, the more often you have to spray, the less it rains obviously the less you have to spray. An airblast or mist sprayer is the best way to spray pumpkins because it gets your chemicals on the top and bottom of the leaves. Always alternate different modes of action on your fungicides when you spray. This helps to prevent resistance from occurring.

Harvest

When your planting your fields, you need to be thinking about how you're going to harvest your pumpkins so that you leave roads every so many feet. We leave roads every 75-80 feet, this allows my airblast to reach half way thru the field on each side when I'm spraying, and cuts down how far my workers have to carry pumpkins to the nearest road. We have one crew go ahead of the truck and cut the pumpkins, and carry them to the road. If they need to be stickered for retail stores this is where we do it. The we have a truck and trailer come by to load the pumpkins, we take our bin boxes and pallets to the field and load directly onto them on the trailer. This allows one man to take the load into the warehouse and unload by himself. Be careful when stacking the pumpkins in the bin, this is a point where a lot of broken stems can occur. When the pumpkins are 80-90% orange you want to get them out of the field and the sun as soon as possible. If left in the field to long, they can sunburn and rot. You need to

have a dry, shady place to store the pumpkins once you get them out of the field. Pumpkins need to be sorted by size and variety when you're loading the pumpkins in the boxes in the field. This allows one person to load customers at your loading facility and helps to avoid handling the pumpkins multiple times.

Pricing

This is a tricky point. You want to price your product so that you can make a profit, but you also want to be low enough so that your customers can turn a profit and come back to you the next year. We price a 36" bin of jacks for \$125, novelty pumpkins are generally \$10 higher because the yield just isn't there. If your customers want mixed bins then you have to add a little to your price for the labor it takes to handle the pumpkins. If you want to sell by the pound then 14-16 cents per lb., is a typical range. Some customers might not want the bin and pallet, that's fine, but remember, it costs labor to handle these pumpkins again. We've heard of prices being in the \$200 range during dry years, you can try to play the market and adjust accordingly; we've just kept a steady price that we feel is fair to help ensure that customer returns next year. These prices are for smaller customers, retail chains will demand a lower price per bin, but to be fair, you don't put as many pumpkins per bin so that they can be double stacked on a trailer truck, so the end price per pumpkin still remains about the same.

Example \$125 per bin / 50 pumpkins = \$2.50 per pumpkin

\$95 per bin / 40 pumpkins = \$2.37 per pumpkin

With potential profits of \$1500 - \$2500 per acre, it is a good rotational crop for extra income, but remember, you need to rotate to a different crop every other year for weed, disease, and insect control. So if you have 100 acres, you probably wouldn't want to do more than 33 acres of pumpkins so that you can rotate to a different crop for a couple of years, preferably one that's not in the cucurbit family. Good Luck!

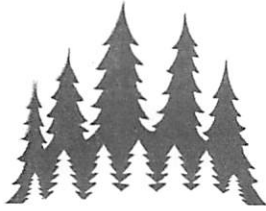
Chemicals

<u>Chemical</u>	<u>Container</u>	<u>Price</u>	<u>Rate</u>	<u>\$/acre</u>
<u>Fungicides</u>				
Ranman	quart	\$252.00	2.75oz	\$32.20
Quadris Top	2.5 gallons	\$550.00	16oz	\$27.50
Tanos	7.5lbs	\$340.75	9oz	\$26.10
Bravo	2.5 gallons	\$116.00	3pts	\$17.40
<u>Insecticides</u>				
Coragen	1 gallon	\$921.20	6oz	\$43.90
Grizzly	1 gallon	\$125.00	1.9oz	\$2.00
Asana	1 gallon	\$76.00	9.6oz	\$5.80
Venom	5lbs	\$608.00	3oz	\$22.80
<u>Herbicides</u>				
Herbivore	20oz	\$325.90	1oz	\$16.30
Select	2.5 gallons	\$219.80	16oz	\$11.00
Gramoxone	2.5 gallons	\$75.00	1qt	\$7.50
Charger	2.5 gallons	\$141.20	1.5pt	\$10.70
Reflex	2.5 gallons	\$108.00	1.5pt	\$8.10

Example:

Week 1

Bravo	3pts	\$17.40	
Tanos	9oz	\$26.10	
Venom	3oz	<u>\$22.80</u>	
			\$66.30/acre



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Stanley & Martha Lyon

Richard Lyon

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Delivery available, cost dependent on location

Jack-O-Lantern Pumpkins

10-35 lbs (small, medium, large)
Gladiator, and Aladdin

\$125.00 per bin (includes display box and palletized)

Multi-Colored Pumpkins

Jarradale (blue), Moonshine (white), Cinderella (red), Fairytale (brown),

\$135.00 per bin (includes display box and palletized)
\$145.00 per bin if mixed

Giant Pumpkins

Prizewinners (50-150lbs)

\$110.00 per bin (includes display box and palletized)

Pie Pumpkins

Field Trip (softball size, approx. 200 per bin)

\$160.00 per bin (includes display box and palletized)

Miniature Pumpkins, Winged Gourds, Turks Turban

Baby Boo (white ribbed), Kandy Korn (smooth), Jin Se Little (Miniature)

\$16.00 1 ¹/₉ bu box

Winter Squash

(Spaghetti, Acorn, Butternut, & Delicata)

\$15.00 1 ¹/₉ bu box

Large Gourds

(Birdhouse, Swan, Caveman's Club, Apple, Lunch Lady)

\$120.00 per bin (includes display box and palletized)