

October 2016 Book of the Month
Pumpkin Circle: The Story of a Garden
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Pumpkin Circle: The Story of a Garden is a detailed story which explores the pumpkin lifecycle through clever rhymes and beautiful real-life illustrations. The reader follows the lifecycle starting with the seeds, and is shown each step of the pumpkin's growth, including how nature interacts with the pumpkin plant. We even see how carved pumpkins contribute to the pumpkin "circle" when they are left to decompose in the garden. *Pumpkin Circle* illuminates how important seeds are to the pumpkin plant's sustainability, an example that applies to many of the plants we rely on for food and fiber.



Fun Facts:

- Although pumpkins are a minor crop in North Carolina, many farmers plant between one and five acres as a source of additional income.¹
- North Carolina growers plant many different varieties, including Mammoth Gold, Autumn Gold, Happy Jack, Big Max, Atlantic Giant, Prize Winner and Sugar Pie.¹
- The word pumpkin originates from the Greek word "pepon" meaning "large melon."¹
- The first version of pumpkin pie came about when early Americans would slice off the pumpkin's top, remove the seeds and fill it with milk, spices, and syrup. They would then bake it for hours in hot ashes.¹
- Pumpkins are a good source of nutrition. They contain vitamin A, vitamin B and potassium.¹

Activities

Pumpkin Predictions²

Present three different sized pumpkins and ask students to predict the weights and number of seeds inside for each pumpkin. Which pumpkin will have the most seeds? What determines the weight of a pumpkin? Ask the students to count the number of ribs on each pumpkin. Is there a relationship between the number of ribs and the size of the pumpkin? How can that relationship be expressed? Students can track their predictions and the pumpkin results on a chart.

STEM Pumpkin Designs ²

Give a small or medium sized pumpkin to each student and assist in hollowing it out. Students may choose to discard or use the insides for the activity. Ask the students to design a new use for the pumpkin. For example, some people use the shell of a pumpkin as a soup bowl, and Cinderella's pumpkin was used as a stage coach. Challenge your class to brainstorm new and unusual uses for pumpkins. Let them draw their designs in a notebook, and use other materials such as construction paper, pipe cleaners, Popsicle sticks, etc. for construction of their designs.

Pumpkin Lifecycle Booklets

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=21qi9ZcQVto>

Using the YouTube link above, ask the students to construct a mini book. Students will use *Pumpkin Circle: The Story of a Garden* to determine the different phases of the pumpkin's lifecycle: seeds, plantlet, full grown plant, plant with blossoms, harvested pumpkin. They should label and draw pictures for each phase of the cycle, and each cycle should have its own page in their mini books. Upper elementary students can use the extra pages to create a glossary and book index.

Links:

- American Farm Bureau Pumpkin Ag Mag
<http://www.agintheclassroom.org/TeacherResources/AgMags/Pumpkin%20Interactive%20Ag%20Mag2.pdf>
- Time Lapse Pumpkin Vines Growing Video
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DJGJiAKS90M>
- Pumpkin Jack First Grade Lesson Plan
<http://www.ncagintheclassroom.com/Portals/1/pdf/curriculum/PumpkinJackLessonPlan.pdf?ver=2015-11-18-143353-337>

Sources:

1. <http://www.ncagr.gov/markets/commodit/horticul/pumpkin/>
2. http://www.educationworld.com/a_lesson/lesson/lesson028.shtml