



Fall Harvest Display

Fall is finally here! After another hot summer, I am sure that many of you could not wait for cooler temperatures. Nothing says fall like the changing of leaves on the trees, garden mums, pansies, violas and pumpkins. I love to see the beautiful displays of pumpkins, straw bales, gourds and squash throughout the Memphis community this time of year.

Recently I went to the Pumpkin Field Day at the West Tennessee AgResearch and Education Center in Jackson. Jason Reeves, the Research Horticulturist at the Education Center, has put together a fall harvest display that will blow your mind! He actually grows and evaluates a large selection of cucurbits (such as pumpkins, gourds and winter squash) for disease tolerance in the hot and humid conditions of West Tennessee. The data collected in the trials assists commercial growers in choosing the right varieties for our region. After all the data has been crunched then it is time for Jason to “work his magic”.



I learned a few tips from Jason that will help you create your own fall harvest display:

- Look for cucurbits with the stems intact. Select ones that are firm to the touch and without any nicks or cuts. Be careful when transporting cucurbits so as not to damage them. Damage can cause decay.
- Choose contrasting sizes and shapes. Deep orange, light and dark green, white and beige, will contrast nicely with each other.
- Wash any dirty cucurbits in a mild bleach solution to kill any fungus or bacteria. Rinse thoroughly with clean water.
- You must have a base for your display. This could be your patio, straw bales, wheelbarrow or wagon. Cucurbits will last longer if they are not placed directly on the cold and wet ground.

- You need a focal point for your display. Using large pumpkins, cornstalks, scarecrows and a pot or two of seasonal flowers will create impact.
- Be sure to check your display every couple of days for deteriorating cucurbits. Your display should last until Thanksgiving Day with proper care.

If you would like more information about the Pumpkin Harvest Display, visit <http://west.tennessee.edu/events/> . The display will be open daily to public viewing September 29 until November 27. You don't want to miss it! I enjoyed it and I am sure that you will too! Bring your camera! Until next time, happy gardening!



Christopher Campbell