



What to do with Your Halloween Pumpkins

Pumpkins and jack-o'-lanterns are great fall decorations. After Halloween, there are several options of what to do with your unwanted pumpkins. Consider these options before resorting to throwing them into the trash.

1. Feed livestock

Instead of throwing away pumpkins, consider feeding them to livestock. Live-stock such as cattle, chickens, and pigs will eat pumpkins. Only feed them pumpkins that are not painted or bleached and are not yet molded.

2. Feed wildlife

If you do not have livestock, old pumpkins can be disposed of in your yard or woods to feed wildlife such as birds, deer, and squirrels. Only feed them pumpkins that are not painted or bleached and are not yet molded. Cutting pumpkins into smaller pieces is ideal for eating as food sources in chilly weather become scarce.



3. Composting

Pumpkins are great to put into your compost piles. For faster composting, break or cut the pumpkins into smaller pieces. Do not compost pumpkins with paint, stickers, or other decorations.

**Do not forget to turn your compost pile this month! **

4. Preserving seeds

After collecting pumpkin seeds, lay them on a paper towel to dry out. Make sure they are completely dry to prevent mold while storing. Put seeds in a plastic bag, remember to label them if you have different varieties, and store them in a cool place such as the refrigerator. Once the frost has passed the following year, you can plant the seeds to grow new pumpkins for fall. For more info on growing pumpkins in Mississippi, check out Extension Publication 2905, "Growing Pumpkins for the Home Garden."



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Growing Microgreens at Home

There's something incredibly satisfying about watching a tray of seeds transform into a lush carpet of tender greens in just a couple of weeks. Growing microgreens is one of the easiest and most rewarding ways to enjoy homegrown flavor, and you don't even need a garden bed to do it.

I've been growing trays of colorful microgreens that brighten the greenhouse benches. One of my favorite combinations includes red cabbage, purple kohlrabi, and broccoli microgreens. When grown side by side, the deep purples and bright greens create a striking contrast that's as beautiful as it is delicious.

Microgreens are the young seedlings of edible vegetables and herbs, harvested when they're only a couple of inches tall and full of fresh, concentrated flavor. They're perfect for adding to salads, sandwiches, wraps, or even sprinkled on top of soups and pasta.

Growing them couldn't be simpler. All you need is a shallow tray or container with drainage holes, quality potting mix, and your choice of seeds. Fill the tray with about an inch of pre-moistened soil and scatter the seeds evenly across the surface. Press them gently into the soil and cover lightly with a thin layer of mix or vermiculite.

In the warm, humid conditions of a Southern greenhouse or sunny porch, most microgreens germinate within a few days. I like to cover my trays for the first 48 hours to hold in moisture, then uncover them and place them in bright, indirect light. A greenhouse bench or sunny kitchen window works perfectly.

Consistent moisture is key. Keep the surface damp but not soggy. A fine mist spray works well to prevent soil splashing and fungal problems. Because microgreens rely on the nutrients stored in their seeds, there's no need to fertilize.

In about 10 to 14 days, your tray will be ready for harvest. When the first true leaves appear, use clean scissors to snip the stems just above the soil line. Rinse gently, pat dry, and enjoy immediately. The fresh, crisp texture and bold flavors are far superior to anything you can buy in the store.

If you want a continuous supply, simply start a new tray every week or two. Mix and match seed types, such as mustard, kale, arugula, or radish, for a variety of colors, textures, and flavors.

Whether you're a seasoned gardener or just looking for an easy indoor project, microgreens bring a burst of garden freshness to the table year-round. In the South, where sunlight and warmth are plentiful, these little greens thrive, turning even the smallest space into a productive mini-garden.



Garden Calendar: November

Plant

- Plant shrubs and trees after soil cools.
- Plant summer blooming perennials: Iris, Daylily, and Daisies. Plant winter and spring annuals: Pansy, Pinks, Flowering Cabbage, and Kale.
- Root Rose cuttings.



Water

- Water all newly planted trees and plants regularly.

Prune

- Remove dead limbs and prune evergreen shrubs.
- Cut off tops of brown perennials, leave roots in the soil.



Do Not Prune

- Do not prune spring flowering shrubs such as Azaleas, Hydrangeas, Mock Orange, Spirea, and Flowering Quince because flower buds are already forming.
- Delay pruning of most trees and shrubs until February since any new growth stimulated by pruning may be killed by a sudden freeze.

Miscellaneous

- Put leaves and spent annuals into compost bin.
- Add mulch to your garden and all ornamental beds for winter protection.
- Repair and sharpen garden tools, store with light coat of oil to prevent rusting.
- Build bird feeders and houses.



In Bloom

- Impatiens, Cannas, Roses, Witch Hazel, Gerbera Daisies, Sweet Olive, Camellias, Sasanquas, Japanese Plum, and Poinsettias.



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Soil, It's More Than Dirt

Gardeners often focus on what grows above the ground: our vegetables, annual and perennial flowers, and ornamental trees and shrubs. But behind every healthy garden lies a complex world in the soil beneath our feet. Soil is neither simply dirt nor is it just sand, silt, and clay. It's a living, breathing ecosystem filled with billions of microscopic organisms that help create the cycles of plant life. Understanding and caring for this hidden world can mean the difference between struggling plants and a thriving garden.

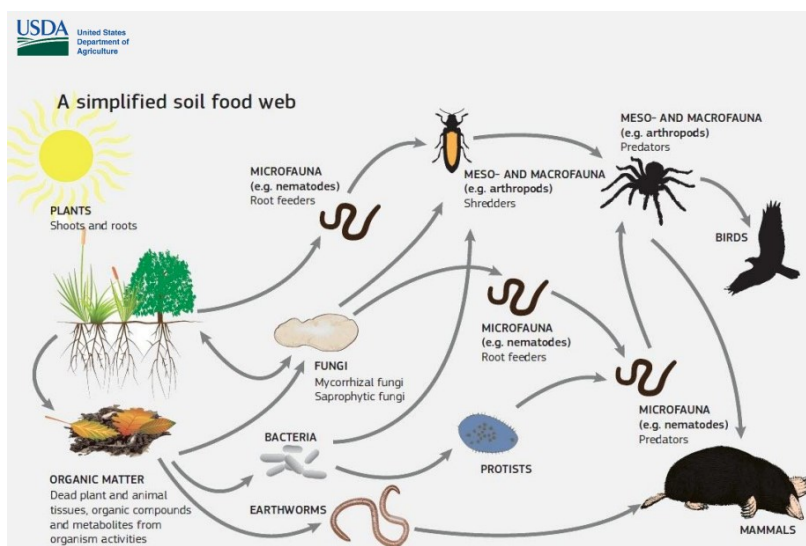


Soil is a complex mixture of minerals, organic matter, air, water, and living organisms including bacteria, fungi, protozoa, nematodes, and arthropods all working together to support plant growth. In ecological terms, soil organisms form a soil food web. This underground web not only recycles nutrients but also improves soil structure, water retention, and plant health. Bacteria and fungi decompose plant residues; protozoa and nematodes feed on these microbes releasing nutrients back into the soil; and larger organisms such as earthworms and insects mix and aerate the soil.

Many bacteria and fungi form symbiotic relationships with plant roots. The most well-known example of bacteria is the nitrogen-fixing bacteria associated with legumes such as peas and beans. These bacteria convert atmospheric nitrogen into forms plants can use, a natural process that reduces the need for additional fertilizers. Mycorrhizal fungi attach to plant roots, extending microscopic filaments called hyphae deep into the soil. These fungi assist the plant in acquiring nitrogen, phosphorus, micronutrients and water in exchange for sugar produced by the plant.

Healthy soil depends on a steady supply of organic matter, which feeds soil microbes and improves soil texture. When organic materials such as compost, leaves, or cover crops decompose, they produce humus, a stable form of organic matter that enhances nutrient-holding capacity and water infiltration. Maintaining at least 3–5% organic matter in garden soils is ideal for most Mississippi landscapes. Regular additions of compost or mulched plant residues help maintain this balance and sustain soil life. On the other hand, excessive tilling, overuse of fertilizers, or repeated pesticide applications can disrupt microbial activity and degrade soil structure.

As the soil is disturbed less and plant diversity increases, the soil food web becomes more balanced and diverse, making soil nutrients more available. Diverse microbial populations with bacteria, fungi, protozoa, nematodes, and larger soil fauna such as insects and earthworms promote nutrient cycling, healthy plants, and keep disease-causing organisms in check.





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Trees for Wildlife

While many hunting enthusiasts are busy planting wildlife food plots this time of year, Fall (September – November) is also a great time to plant trees for attracting wildlife. Planting trees during the Fall allows for root growth and establishment before the hot summer temps arrive. Fall planted trees often require less water and are less stressed than spring planted trees in the following summer. A few factors to consider when selecting trees are the tree purpose and local climate. First, determine if the tree's purpose is food, shelter or to attract pollinators. Below is a list of trees that are well suited to Mississippi and provide benefits to wildlife.

Trees for Wildlife (Food and/or Shelter)

American beech	<i>Fagus grandifolia</i>	Longleaf pine	<i>Pinus palustris</i>
American elm	<i>Ulmus americana</i>	Nuttall oak	<i>Quercus nuttallii</i>
Black cherry	<i>Prunus serotina</i>	Persimmon	<i>Diospyros virginiana</i>
Black gum	<i>Nyssa sylvatica</i>	Sassafras	<i>Sassafras albidum</i>
Box elder	<i>Acer negundo</i>	Serviceberry	<i>Amelanchier arborea</i>
Cherry	<i>Prunus spp.</i>	Silverbell	<i>Halesia diptera</i>
Cherry laurel	<i>Prunus caroliniana</i>	Slash pine	<i>Pinus elliottii</i>
Chickasaw plum	<i>Prunus angustifolia</i>	Southern magnolia	<i>Magnolia grandiflora</i>
Crab apple	<i>Malus angustifolia</i>	Southern red oak	<i>Quercus falcata</i>
Dogwood	<i>Cornus florida</i>	Southern wax myrtle	<i>Myrica cerifera</i>
Eastern red cedar	<i>Juniperus virginiana</i>	Spruce pine	<i>Pinus glabra</i>
Fringe tree	<i>Chionanthus virginiana</i>	Sweet bay magnolia	<i>Magnolia virginiana</i>
Green ash	<i>Fraxinus pennsylvanica</i>	Sweet gum	<i>Liquidamber styraciflua</i>
Hackberry	<i>Celtis laevigata</i>	Tulip tree	<i>Liriodendron tulipifera</i>
Hawthorns	<i>Crataegus spp.</i>	White oak	<i>Quercus alba</i>
Hollies	<i>Ilex spp.</i>	Willow oak	<i>Quercus phellos</i>
Ironwood	<i>Carpinus caroliniana</i>	Wild plum	<i>Prunus americana</i>
Live oak	<i>Quercus virginiana</i>	Willow	<i>Salix spp.</i>
Locust	<i>Robinia spp.</i>		

Natural vegetation, including a variety of native trees, provides nuts, seeds, nectar, fruit, and other sources of nourishment for wildlife. It's also less costly than artificial feeders. Nesting and shelter areas where wildlife are protected are also essential. Various wildlife species require different landscape features for needed protection so thought should be given regarding proper plant selection.

Whether you are interested in planting trees to improve biodiversity on your hunting land or looking to increase the presence of wildlife or pollinators in the home landscape, incorporating food or shelter producing trees is a great way to provide long term benefits to your native wildlife populations.



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Pruning

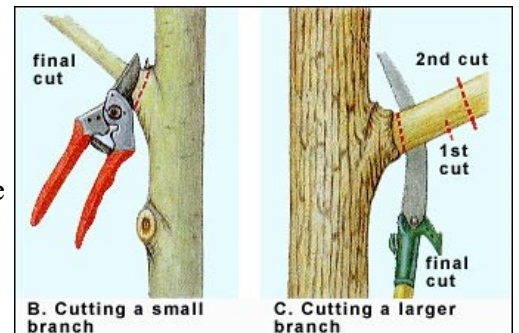
We typically have a long window of opportunity to do many of our winter garden/orchard chores and we can usually find a good day to suit our comfort level from December through early March. With dormancy in our perennial plants coming soon, now is a great time to start thinking about and observing trees/plants that may need pruning and preparing for pruning our landscape plants during Jan - March. We recommend waiting until the entire plant is dormant before doing any major pruning as this can cause stress to the plant or encourage a flush of new growth, which can then be injured by cold temperatures. It is important to think about the reasons you are pruning before beginning your pruning. A few reasons to prune include:



1. To keep or limit the size and shape of a plant so it won't overpower the landscape.
2. To remove undesirable growth that distracts from the balance or symmetry of the plant.
3. To remove diseased, insect-infested, dead, or abnormal plant tissue.
4. To stimulate flowering and/or fruit production of old plants.
5. To develop a specific plant form, such as a hedge or an espalier, as in formal landscape designs.
6. To direct or train trees to grow in a particular form to eliminate problems.
7. To remove plant parts that may interfere with structures or utility lines or that may create a visibility problem.

Prune after the landscape feature of your plant has passed. For spring flowering plants, prune in late spring as the flowering season is ending. This allows for adequate growth during the summer to produce flower buds for the next year. For fall-flowering plants, such as some of the camellias, use tip-pruning or thinning. Prune as the flowering season is ending. For plants with colorful berries, prune after the berries are gone.

Never prune plants without proper equipment. Be sure your equipment is sharp and clean. Clean equipment helps prevent the spread of disease organisms. Sharp equipment makes cutting easier and helps avoid tearing plants. A proper pruning cut does not leave a stub allowing rot to enter the trunk or cut too deep into the trunk of the tree leaving an entry wound for fungus/disease or insects. A properly pruning location is at the branch collar, just outside with the swollen area known as the branch bark ridge. This will allow a safe, and relatively quick, healing of the wound while allowing for the tree's natural ability to seal off and stop rot from entering the trunk.



More detailed information on the correct procedure for pruning, as well as general care of fruit trees and general landscape trees, can be found in respective publications at your local extension office or on the extension.msstate.edu website.



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Treating Fire Ants Around the Home

Fire ants are the most common insect pests of home lawns. They occur in practically every lawn in Mississippi! Even if you manage to achieve a yard completely free of fire ants, it probably won't remain that way for long because newly swarmed fire ant queens will quickly recolonize it. New fire ant colonies thrive especially well in areas that are free of competing colonies. Fire ant control is a never-ending battle in the South, but there are steps you can take to minimize fire ants around your home. There are multiple ways of controlling fire ants: baits, mound treatments, and broadcast insecticide applications.



The easiest, cheapest, most effective thing you can do to control fire ants is to use baits. Learn to use baits properly and preventatively, and you will reduce the number of mounds in your yard by 80 to 90 percent. If you want even better control, you can supplement your baiting program with spot-treating mounds that survive the bait treatments following the mound treatment suggestions below but, wait several days after applying baits before you treat individual mounds with contact insecticide treatments to provide time for workers to carry baits into the colonies.

The key to success with baits is applying them as broadcast treatments instead of treating only individual mounds for better results. In addition to the big mounds you can easily see, there are a lot of little colonies that are just getting started. If you eliminate only the big mounds, the small colonies will quickly grow into large mounds. Broadcast bait treatments target all colonies in the yard, regardless of size, and do not have to be evenly applied like when applying fertilizer.

If you're going to treat only once, early spring is one of the best times to apply fire ant baits because fire ants are actively foraging for food at this time. However, for the most effective control, treating again in the summer and in the fall. Apply baits when the ground is dry and when ground temperatures are between 70 and 90 °F with no forecast of rain. If you do use baits for individual mounds, don't put the bait directly on top of the mound. Instead, spread the specified amount of bait on the area around the mound so that foraging workers can find it readily. Remember that fire ant baits are supposed to be slow-acting. Depending on which bait you use, it can take 2 to 6 weeks to obtain maximum control. Baits work great, but you have to be patient!

Mound treatments can be either liquid or dry (granular or powder) insecticides. Mound treatments provide much quicker control than bait treatments and are the best way to quickly eliminate mounds that are especially troublesome. The dry mound treatments are easy and convenient to use, but these are less effective and usually take a few days to work. Regardless of which method you use, don't disturb mounds before treating. If you do, the workers may take the queen or queens to safety by moving them either deep into the mound or out one of those underground tunnels to establish satellite mounds.

Broadcast insecticide treatments, liquid or granular, are contact insecticides that are applied over the entire lawn and can control many other insects such as fleas, ticks, grubs, mole crickets, etc. They are generally more time-consuming and costly to use than baits. Don't confuse granular contact insecticides with granular baits. Baits are impregnated with oil or some other food substance and a small amount of slow-acting insecticide. Granular insecticides are simply granules that are impregnated with insecticide. They are not attractive to ants. Instead, the insecticide in the granules moves into the soil and controls foraging ants and newly settled queens by contact activity. Consequently, obtaining uniform coverage is more important when applying broadcast insecticide granules than when applying granular baits.

Before purchasing insecticides, read the label carefully to be sure that the insecticide you choose controls the particular group of pests you need to control. Follow all label directions! For a list of approved products for controlling fire ants or additional information, see Extension Publication 2429 Control Fire Ants in Your Yard, or Extension Publication 2331 Control Insect Pests In and Around the Home Lawn.



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The Beauty of Tree Foliage in the Fall

Every fall we see a mixture of red, purple, orange and yellow leaves. This is the result of chemical processes that take place in the tree as the seasons change from summer to winter. During the spring and summer, the leaves serve as food manufacturers necessary for the tree's growth. This food-making process takes place in the leaf in numerous cells containing chlorophyll, which gives the leaf its green color. Chlorophyll absorbs the energy from sunlight that is used in transforming carbon dioxide and water to carbohydrates, such as sugars and starch. This is the process we know as photosynthesis.

But in the fall, the leaves stop their food-making process and the leaves' work ends. This is because of changes in the length of daylight and changes in temperature. The chlorophyll breaks down, the green color disappears, and the yellow to orange colors become visible. Often there is too much sugar in leaves to transfer back to the tree. In this situation, the chemical combination of these sugars with other substances produces many color shades. Some mixtures of various amounts of chlorophyll and other pigments produce the brilliant red of the dogwood to the darker red-browns of oaks or the yellows and purples of sweetgum, while others give the sugar maple its brilliant orange.

While the leaf is changing, other important processes are taking place. At the point where the stem of a leaf is attached, a special layer of cells develops and gradually cuts tissues supporting the leaf. The leaf falls leaving a scar where it grew on the twig. Shedding leaves is another provision for winter. After broadleaf trees shed their leaves, branches can more easily support snow and ice accumulations which is particularly useful in areas more north.



Temperature, light, and water supply have an influence on the degree and the duration of fall color. Low temperatures above freezing will favor the bright reds in maples. However, early frost will weaken the brilliant red color. Rainy and/or overcast days tend to increase the intensity of fall colors. The best time to enjoy fall color would be on a clear, dry, and cool day. So, enjoy it while it lasts, even if for such as short time.



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Caring for Houseplants

Houseplants add color to our homes and can improve air quality. Usually plants in the home have fewer problems than those in the landscape, but infestations of insects or pathogens, as well as environmental conditions, may cause the plants to be unhealthy or less attractive.

One of the major causes of problems in houseplants is the level of watering. Underwatering is frequently first seen as yellowing of the leaves and browning around the leaf edges. The air inside our homes tends to be much lower in humidity than it is outside. This may cause plants to lose water by transpiration much quicker than expected. Additionally, being placed near an air vent can cause leaves to desiccate. Overwatering is another frequent problem and can cause leaves to wilt. The soil mix for overwatered plants will often have a sour smell and the root system may be dark and off color. To avoid problems with over or underwatering, stick your finger into the soil to a depth of about two inches. If you feel moisture, do not water the plant.



Mealybug

Insect pests of houseplants include aphids, whiteflies, scale, and mealybugs. These insects often hide on the underside of leaves allowing them to escape notice until populations are high. Take care when purchasing new plants or bringing plants in from outdoors as you may be carrying these insects into the house. Infestations of insects can harm the appearance of plants as well as transmit plant diseases. Occasionally, houseplants will develop sooty mold due to insect infestations. Sooty mold is caused by a fungus and appears as a black coating on leaves, and in severe cases stems of plants. This mold is feeding on the “honeydew” produced by sap feeding insects. Most insect pests of houseplants can be removed by forcefully washing leaves of the plant with water. Insecticidal soap and Neem oil, which are both widely available in garden stores, are also effective in eliminating most pest problems.

Disease problems are less common in houseplants as most bacterial or fungal diseases require periods of high humidity in order to infect the plant. The lower humidity inside houses prevents this from occurring in most cases. However, as with insect pests, care should be taken not to bring infected plants into the house as these can serve as a source of pathogens to infect other plants. Disease in houseplants is usually first observed as yellow, brown, or black spots on the leaves. The shape of these spots varies with the particular organism causing the disease. Grayish-white powdery material on leaves and stems is a sign the plant is infected with powdery mildew. Houseplants may also occasionally develop root-rot diseases which are initially observed as wilting or a lesion near the base of the stem. Houseplant diseases are best managed preventatively. Care should be taken to not overwater the plant, and when watering do not allow the foliage to remain wet for long periods of time as this promotes disease development. Plants should also be spaced to allow for good air circulation. Should disease symptoms appear, the affected foliage can be pruned so that it does not serve as a source for more disease. Additionally, once the disease is diagnosed, fungicides or bactericides can be applied if needed.



Leaf spot disease

Calendar of Upcoming Events

DATE	EVENT
Nov. 6th	Pine Belt Beekeepers Association Meeting The Pine Belt Beekeepers Association meeting will be held at the Lamar County Extension office beginning at 6:00 PM.
Nov. 8th	Crosby Arboretum's Second Saturday Stroll: Botany Field Walk for the Plant Passionate Person 9:00—10:30 AM. Join Arboretum director Pat Drackett on a field walk to explore the native plants in the Arboretum exhibits, learn tips for their identification, and discuss the uses of native plants in the home landscape, including those which are edible or have high wildlife value. Members free; non-members \$7. *To register for this and other events at the Crosby Arboretum, visit http://www.crosbyarboretum.msstate.edu/events-page
Nov. 22nd	Private Applicator Certification Training 10:00 AM—4:00 PM. Harrison County Extension Office located at 14281 County Farm Rd., Gulfport. \$60 per individual: Check or money order only! This certification is for applying pesticides on land owned or rented for agricultural purposes. Call 228-865-4227 to register.
Nov. 26th	Crosby Arboretum's Family Fun Activity: Make a Leaf Animal 9:00—11:00 AM. Grab your favorite people and collect some leaves as you hike one of our beautiful trails. Stop by our program room and use some of our supplies to turn those leaves into whimsical animal art! Don't have time for the hike? That's ok, just drop in the program room and use some we will have waiting for you. FREE. Daily admission rates apply.
Nov. 29th	Crosby Arboretum's Family Fun Activity: Make a Nature Journal 9:00—11:00 AM. Nature journals are a fun way to get in touch with nature and your feelings! Drop into our program room and get creative with some of our supplied materials to make your very own nature journal. Hike one of the trails at the Crosby Arboretum and capture that memory in your new nature journal! FREE. Daily admission rates apply.



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Mississippi Pesticide Safety Education Program

Extension delivers new, EPA-mandated training for private pesticide applicators

Applicators who use restricted-use pesticides are **required** to complete a new training to **renew or obtain** certification.

In-person and online trainings are available. Applicators must pay \$60 and score at least 70% on the 55-question competency exam.

5 hours of video modules will introduce new

- safety procedures.
- environmental protection requirements.
- pesticide application methods.

Scan here
or visit <http://msuext.ms/dkp8h> to sign up for
in-person training or to begin online training.



Online training requires a laptop or desktop computer with a camera, microphone, and valid photo ID. Neither the modules nor the exam is available on mobile devices.

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