

# Hot Weather, Rain Mean Fewer Pumpkins



Some of you may have a harder time finding pumpkins for Halloween this year. You also may have to spend more money for a pumpkin.

This is probably going to be the second year in a row that the U.S. pumpkin harvest is down. Some farmers are saying that if you are picky about your pumpkins, you should buy them early in October to make sure you get the kinds you want.

Pumpkin plants need warm weather, sunshine, and rain to grow. But some U.S. pumpkin farms got too much rain this summer. If there is too much rain and the pumpkins sit in puddles in the fields, they can rot.

Other places were very hot and did not get a lot of rain. When the weather is very hot, pumpkin plants may grow only one pumpkin instead of two or three. If the plants don't get enough water, the pumpkins will be smaller than normal. Also, hot weather early in the growing season may cause pumpkins to ripen before they are needed in stores.

## **NEWS WORD BOX**

harvest normal drought  
decoration percent ripen

Pumpkins are not the only U.S. crops harmed by weather. A drought caused by hot weather harmed corn crops in many parts of the Midwest. Heavy rains harmed tomato, bean, and squash crops in Wisconsin. Spring freezes mean this year's apple crop might be smaller than normal in Illinois.

## **MORE FACTS ABOUT PUMPKINS**

- Illinois and California are the top pumpkin-producing states. Other large producers include Pennsylvania, New York, Michigan, and Ohio.
- Most of the pumpkins grown in the U.S. are used for decoration.
- An average pumpkin is 45 percent water. (A watermelon is 92 percent water.)

## **THINK ABOUT THE NEWS**

Why might pumpkins cost more money this year than in the past?  
Explain your answer.