It takes a lot to grow the perfect pumpkin. Farmers choose varieties, choose plants, avoid weeds, manage pests and organisms, maintain clean and healthy field conditions, and put in the long hours to care for their fields to ensure good pollination and fruit set. If you're growing one of those big, beautiful pumpkins, here are seven things to look for...

1. **Shape**: Look for a pumpkin that is round and symmetrical. Avoid those that are flat on one side or have odd shapes.

2. **Color**: The color of the pumpkin is important. Ripe pumpkins should be deep orange, but younger ones may be a lighter shade of orange or even greenish-yellow.

3. **Texture**: The skin of the pumpkin should be smooth and free of blemishes or rough patches. Avoid pumpkins with soft spots or discolored areas.

4. **Size**: Pumpkin size can vary greatly, from small pie-sized pumpkins to massive jack-o-lanterns. Choose the size that is right for your needs.

5. **Weight**: A heavier pumpkin usually means a bigger, riper fruit. However, weight alone isn't a guarantee of quality.

6. **Stem**: The stem should be intact and green, indicating that the pumpkin is fresh. Avoid those with cut or wounded stems.

7. **Condition**: Look for pumpkins that are free of signs of damage or disease. Check for signs of mold, rot, or other issues that might affect the pumpkin's quality.

By Steve Reiners

**Field Notes**

**BEETLE QUANTIFICATION**

The Cornell University Coordinated Pest Management Program in the School of Integrative Plant Science is offering a 2-day workshop titled "Quantifying Beetles in the Orchard" on Sept. 16-17 in Ithaca, N.Y. The workshop will cover methods for monitoring and quantifying beetle populations in apple orchards, and will include a field component.

**SEEDS TO SEEDLING**

The Xerces Society for Invertebrate Conservation is hosting a "Seeds to Seedling" workshop on May 16-17 at the Xerces offices in Eugene, Ore. The workshop will cover topics such as planning for pollinators and other beneficial insects, and will include hands-on activities and group discussions.

**FARMING**

**Orbaker’s Fruit Farm has certified Eco Apples**

By Jane Mallory

Eco Apples at Orbaker’s Fruit Farm in Madison, Wis., have received certification from the IPM Institute of North America.

Eco Apple certification is part of a breakthrough program developed by non-profits that promote growth of organic food, in partnership with a regional network of farmers and scientists. The program has developed truly sustainable production standards for organically grown apples with names such as Honeycrisp, Gala, and Jazz. The program is based on the concept of the Eco Apple model, which reduces the need for toxic and natural organic pesticides, for the sake of healthy, productive ecosystems.

In 2010 the program began with six orchards on slightly over 400 acres. Today, the program has grown to 20 orchards across the Northeast, including Orbaker’s Fruit Farm. In Madison, Wis., Orbaker’s Farm has received Eco Apple certification.

Eco Apple growers in the Northern region have already started to see results. “Our apples last until Halloween and beyond. And if you go early, you can have your choice of the best fruit,” said Tom Orbaker, owner of Orbaker’s Fruit Farm in Madison, Wis.

“Orbaker’s Farm includes managed honey bees as well as birds that help control pests,” Orbaker said. “In fact, we see a lot of beneficial insects that visit each blossom before they visit the apple blossom.”

Our Eco Apples grower community is a cooperative of farmers who work together to use alternative methods. Our Eco Apples work closely with the IPM Institute of North America to help maintain the certification program.

The program is based on the concept of the Eco Apple model, which reduces the need for toxic and natural organic pesticides, for the sake of healthy, productive ecosystems. The program is based on the concept of the Eco Apple model, which reduces the need for toxic and natural organic pesticides, for the sake of healthy, productive ecosystems.

“Eco Apples have been grown in Madison, Wis., for the past two years,” said Tom Orbaker, owner of Orbaker’s Fruit Farm in Madison, Wis.

“Eco Apples are unique because they are grown without the use of synthetic pesticides,” Orbaker said. “Our apples last until Halloween and beyond. And if you go early, you can have your choice of the best fruit.”

The program is based on the concept of the Eco Apple model, which reduces the need for toxic and natural organic pesticides, for the sake of healthy, productive ecosystems.

**September Senates:**

**Squash School for kids**

The Seneca County Cornell Cooperative Extension will offer a Squash School for kids on Sept. 23 from 10 a.m. to 12 p.m. at Jordan Hall, Newfield, N.Y. The program is for children ages 5-12. For more information, call 607-569-6470 or email jordanshull@syr.edu.

**Tomato program 2017**

The tomato program in the School of Integrative Plant Science at Cornell University is offering a series of workshops for tomato growers this fall.

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