Pumpkin Production at Royal Oak Farm Orchard
Harvard, Illinois
Who is Royal Oak Farm?

Started in 1992.......Planted 1700 apple trees.

Added in 1993.......Planted 3500 apple trees.

Added in 1994.......Planted 5000 apple trees.

In 1997.....................Opened U-Pick

Since 1997............... added several acres raspberries and about 7-10 acres of pumpkins and about another 3,000 trees and 1 acre of giant pumpkins.

• Four generations of family
• 29 varieties of apples
• 25 varieties of pumpkins
• Open August 15 – November 15 from 9:30 am -5:30 pm
• Pumpkins sold retail via U-Pick and Pre-picked
Retail......

Market, Apple Barn, Bakery, Restaurant

Pavilion, Tee Pee, Carousel Gazebo
Entertainment......

Royal Oak Express Trackless Train

14 horse High-Lite Carousel
Growing Practices

• Start planting last week of May and finish first week of June
• Target picking window of Sept. 15 through Oct. 15
• Plant 85-95 day pumpkins for our décor prior to retail market planting
• Recently purchased John Deere 4 row 7000 planter and converted for pumpkin planting
Seed spacing......

- Hand thin after emergence
- 4’-5’ on large pumpkins
- 3’-4’ on smaller varieties
Row Spacing......

- 10’-12’ on large pumpkins
- 6’-7’ on smaller varieties
- 20’ buffer every 8 to 10 rows for spraying and harvesting purposes
Nutrient management

- Soil Tests every 2 years to for nutrient needs
- Basic 13-13-13 or 16-16-16 mix at planting at 90 lbs/acre based on tests
- Add’l nitrogen feeding just prior to vining at 40 lbs./acre based on tests
Rotational program......

• Rotated between fields every 2-3 years
• Fields never left dormant
• Cover crops or corn rotated in off years
• Field rotated out for several years if disease problems occur
Cover crops......

- Cover crops used to build up nutrients and organic matter as well as suppress weeds
- Most common cover crops used are buckwheat, cowpea, sudan grass, winter rye and hairy vetch
- Warm and cool weather crops used in same growing season
IPM in Pumpkins

- Integrated Pest Management at Royal Oak Farm Orchard
- Main insect pests are **cucumber beetle**, **squash vine borer** and **squash bug**
- Monitor **cucumber beetle** and **squash vine borer** with Trece traps and lures
- **Squash Bug** not a major threat – visual monitoring
Insect management......

- Use Pherocon CRW traps to monitor *cucumber beetle* in early June with Kairomonal Lure and Stun Pill at 1 trap per 10 acres
- Use of FarMore treated seeds for certain pumpkin varieties
- Nuprid or Admire shortly after planting seeds for early control and low rate of Sevin later if needed
Insect management......

- Monitor Squash Vine Borer with Trece Universal Moth Trap
- Use a SQV pheromone lure and Vaportape
- Vaportape is an insecticidal strip with Dichlorovinyl Dimethyl Phosphate at 10%
- Spaced in mid-June at about 1 per 10 acres w/ lures lasting about 4 weeks
- No sprays needed in 2010
Main disease issues in 2010 were Powdery Mildew and Bacterial Spot

- Copper used to control spread of Bacterial Spot
- Rally and Flint used to control Powdery Mildew
- Overall light to moderate pressure w/both diseases and minimal fruit damage
Weed management......

- Most difficult issue to deal with at the farm
- Last 2 years sprays not effective due to weather issues at or after planting
- Recently have tried Strategy right after planting followed by Sandea in row middles prior to vining
- Spot treatment with Roundup and cultivation with Weed Badger between treatments
- Hand weeding as needed
Variety Selection

Variety selections based on:

- Powdery Mildew tolerance
- FarMore treatment availability
- Customer demand on size and shape
- Marketing value, i.e. Peanut Pumpkins, Atlantic Giants
- New varieties tested with good results include Solid Gold, 20 Karat Gold, Gladiator, Camaro, Chucky, Prankster and Field Trip
Retail and Marketing

- Opened new Harvest Barn with focus on pumpkins, gourds and squash
- Pumpkin U-Pick operations run out of Harvest Barn
- Pumpkins sold by the pound, specialty and jack-o-lantern
- Customers get volume discounts at 50 and 100 lbs.
Retail and Marketing........
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Questions and Comments

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