

# PLAYHAVEN FARM LLC & GREEN BUILDING PROJECT



## SUSTAINABLE FARMING : GLEANING PUMPKINS

### PLEASE NOTE:

Everything included in "Sustainable Farming : Gleaning Pumpkins" has been transposed directly from the website. That includes references to the PlayHaven Farm LLC and Green Building Project (PHF&GBP) website pages, external websites, links to documents, etc. Because of how quickly things change on the internet, there are NO links from this document.

### PUMPKINS, A FOOD SOURCE FOR LIVESTOCK (APRIL 2013)

Last Halloween (October 2012), I bought a bunch of the last minute sale pumpkins for decorations and to give to the hens over the winter. One of them was particularly large and fleshy and the hens went nuts for it. I saved the seeds and planted them late (at the same time as the sweet potatoes). The plants are big and blossoming so I'm hoping we will have a bunch of nice sized pumpkins by the time we get the first frost. I have no idea what kind they are so cannot claim anything about them. There may not even be enough to sell, but hope there will.

### FREE PUMPKINS THROUGH GLEANING (NOVEMBER 2013)

We had lots of blossoms this summer and fall (good for the bees) but ended up with only two (2) puny, not-even-pie-size pumpkins. That will teach me, eh? So, like last year I went looking for after season deals on pumpkins. I was a bit TOO late and most of the places I found last year had already disposed of their overstock.

THEN I happened to look at a Garden Center in Blue Springs MO on my way somewhere else and saw LOTS OF PUMPKINS!! Great big jack-o-lantern size pumpkins! I already had practice talking with businesses about taking pumpkins off their hands (gleaning), so I was confident when I spoke to the manager. "I'll be happy to haul away those pumpkins for you, if you like... no charge!" The manager was happy to accept that offer because it meant he didn't have to pay an extra dumpster fee to throw them away.

We ended up with five and a half (5-1/2) pallets full of pumpkins! (There were between 20 and 30 pumpkins per pallet.) Here are a couple photos of the pallets that fit in the ShelterLogic shed.

There is nothing to compare with LOTS of FREE food for the livestock. See the attached PDF about the value of pumpkins as food for livestock entitled Alternative Crops for Beef Cattle.

The cattle were a bit tentative at first ("moo, something new"), but now they dive into them and push each other away to claim their share. I'll have to put some photos on the cattle page.

The hens from last year knew what to do and the newer ladies picked it up REAL fast. YUMMY! Great fiber and lovely nutrients for all!



## **UPDATE, APRIL 2015**

I tried contacting places that sell jack-o-lantern pumpkins about a month before Halloween (October 2014) so I would know who and where to get the leftovers. It was a very disconcerting experience. So after two (2) frustrating experiences, I decided to just wing it (like last year).

It turned out that the pumpkin crop for 2014 was not as plentiful as 2013 had been and most places had run out of pumpkins BEFORE Halloween. HyVee in Blue Springs had some of those white squashes left and said I could have all of them. Ben's in Blue Springs was surprised that I hadn't come by ahead of time (can't win for losing) but they did have ALOT of pie pumpkins and a bunch of squash that they wanted to get rid of. Yes, thank you, HAPPY to help you out!

The hubby headed back to the farm with what we had while I drove around looking for more leftovers. It was slim pickins' and I had just decided to give up when I happened to see a Church sign advertising a Pumpkin Patch for Halloween. I headed for it toot-sweet! I saw a whole BUNCH of pumpkins still in the grass at the Church. Being Saturday, the Church was locked but there was someone cleaning inside and they answered my knock. The nice man called the Associate Pastor who had been in charge of the Pumpkin Patch and the Pastor headed to the Church to talk with me.

Turns out the Associate Pastor had hoped to find a local farm that would use the pumpkins. I was the answer to his prayer. And, he, in turn, was mine. They had purchased the load as a fundraiser from a non-profit in New Mexico and they had made a nice amount from the sales. He said he was going to offer the leftovers to parishioners at the Sunday Service and if I came on Tuesday, I could have all that were still there. Sounded more than fair to me.

On Tuesday (it happened to be Election Day and the church is a Polling Place), we took the trailer and ended up with two (2) FULL loads of pumpkins. (By the way, I made a donation to the Church in Thanks for letting us have the pumpkins.)

Between those and the previous squashes et al, I had enough pumpkins for cattle and chickens through December. I am ever so grateful!

(Do you know what is frustrating still? The place where I had the most frustrating experience... which was that they don't have leftover pumpkins because they donate what is left to charity... had a GREAT BIG pile of orange pumpkins in their compost the week after Halloween. Heavy Sigh. Maybe next year... I must remember to be clear that I'm talking about Jack-o-Lanterns, not food pumpkins.)

## **UPDATE, DECEMBER 2015**

I really learned my lessons from the last couple of years. Don't be discouraged when someone says no. Definitely contact as many places ahead of time as possible. Make it very clear I am asking about their UNSALEABLE jack-o-lantern pumpkins.

I started this when I saw pumpkins for sale at the various grocery stores. I stopped at a few and found out who to talk to about hauling away what they couldn't sell... after Halloween. Generally, what I was told was that they did not expect to have any left, but they would call me if they did. A couple of places just put the leftovers out with a "Free" sign and they disappear very quickly. Most want them gone the day after Halloween.

I also sent an email to the Church that let me have their leftovers last year. I received no response and when I drove by I discovered they were not doing the pumpkin patch fundraiser this year.

This year I was unable to pick up pumpkins until the 4th of November and so that made me apprehensive about my chances of getting any pumpkins for the cattle. Besides which, as you may recall, I wasn't sure I would have cattle if someone bought them. It was a pretty nerve wracking time for me. Basically, I figured if I ended up cattle and no pumpkins, that was life and if I ended up with

pumpkins and no cattle then I would pass them along to any of my cattle farmer friends that wanted them. Happily, I ended up with both cattle and pumpkins!

Thankfully, I did remember to contact Ben's in Blue Spring ahead of time and they were very happy to hear from me. It was a very good year for jack-o-lantern pumpkins even though parts of the country were expecting shortages of pumpkins. The folks at Ben's were fine with holding what they had left until I could pick them up. The hubby and I went out at the schedule date and time and in spite of having to fix a flat tire on the trailer before hauling them back to the farm, we made two (2) trips that day which filled up the ShelterLogic Shed. And Ben's still had plenty of pumpkins and other squash and gourds to sell as Thanksgiving decorations.

The hubby used one of our wire cattle panels, pallets, tie-down straps and reclaimed lumber to make a great big pumpkin bin inside the Shed. (He designed it for the 2014 season and I forgot to give him kudos on it then. You never know if the business wants to keep the cardboard bins and, unfortunately, we didn't know that we should have saved them. Live and learn.)

The folks at Ben's even did some calling of their nursery/garden center contacts to see if anyone else had pumpkins they wanted hauled away. Actually, they were surprised that any of the grocery stores would consider letting me haul the extras away because there are legalities since they sell food... even though the pumpkins I would be getting rid of are not a human food product. It is a valid point that I will keep in mind for the future. I took Ben's some "Thank You" gifts of honey and beef. We also left that day with the understanding that if they didn't sell the rest of the pumpkins (et al), I would be happy to come back and haul them away.



A few weeks later (after Thanksgiving), the folks at Ben's called. The hubby was away on business, so I ended up putting the remaining pumpkins et al in the back of the van since I don't drive with the trailer attached. It took me three (3) trips over two (2) days. We had used about two-thirds of the original number of pumpkins by then and once I put all the remaining pumpkins in, it was completely full again!

I am so happy that Ben's made a profit on their pumpkin sales and that I was able to reduce their costs since they didn't have to pay to have the leftovers hauled away. Plus, instead of going into a landfill, they went into my cattle and what came out of my cattle is feeding the soil. This is a win-win-win-win-win situation.

Crossing fingers and toes that 2016 is also filled with gleaned pumpkins for my cattle!