

Decorative jack-o-lanterns, pumpkins, gourds, and dried corn are a Halloween tradition. But once Halloween is over, [1.3 billion pounds of Halloween pumpkins end up in US landfills](#). There, they undergo anaerobic decomposition, generating significant amounts of methane, a very powerful greenhouse gas, roughly the equivalent of more than the exhaust from 45,000 gasoline cars. St. B's Creation Care team urges us all to repurpose all or some parts of our old pumpkins, gourds, corn, and other vegetation used for decorative purposes. Various online sources offer similar recommendations (for example, search for "how to recycle pumpkins after Halloween"). Here are some of the most eco-friendly options.

Before anything else, remove any candles, lights, glitter, and excessive paint or stickers! Then...

- 1. Compost it.** Pumpkins easily break down when cut into smaller pieces and added to a green bin or compost heap. You can also take them to the free [drop-off composting](#) bins available for all Davidson County residents at a [convenience center](#). (Lazy tip: toss the entire pumpkin on top of whatever brush pile you may have at the corner of your yard or a friend's yard.)
- 2. Bury it.** Burying lets microbes, worms and insects in the dirt break down the pumpkin and turn it into rich soil.
- 3. Leave it for wildlife.** Wherever practical and safe, smash or break up your pumpkin and leave all or some in your yard or woodsy area for local wildlife, like birds, squirrels, and other critters to enjoy. The seeds can act as a natural de-wormer. Just ensure the pumpkin isn't seasoned or salted.
- 4. Feed it to chickens.** Loaded with vitamins A, B, C, E, and zinc, old pumpkins can make a delicious snack for chickens. Also check with neighbors who have various livestock to see if they want pumpkins for their animals. This has been a popular option through Next Door in urban neighborhoods where the random neighbor down the street raises a pig!
- 5. Harvest the seeds.** If you haven't carved your pumpkin, or when you first open it, retrieve the seeds for a delicious and nutritious snack. See online recipes and recommendations for processing. Pumpkin seeds are low in carbs, high in protein and a good source of iron and calcium.
- 6. Make pumpkin puree.** Once seeds are removed, make a puree from the remainder. Quarter the pumpkin, lay it skin-down in a baking dish filled with about a cup of water and bake for 30-45 minutes at 400 degrees F. A knife should be able to cut into the pumpkin's flesh easily. Remove the roasted pumpkin from the skin and puree in a food processor until smooth. Compost the remainder of the pumpkin.
- 7. Make a pumpkin planter.** This option also works best if you haven't carved your pumpkin. To make a temporary planter, cut the top off, remove the seeds, and drill a small hole in the bottom for drainage. Fill with potting soil and plant your favorite seasonal plants.
- 8. Keep it a little longer.** If you haven't carved your pumpkin, leave it for another month as a harvest season decoration, then refer to one of our other ideas for reusing your old pumpkin.
- 9. Donate it to a farm or zoo.** While the Nashville Zoo does not appear to be having a pumpkin donation drive this year, pumpkin donations are welcome once again at the Elephant Sanctuary in Hohenwald, TN.
- 10. Turn it into a bird feeder.** Cut it in half, scoop out the seeds and pulp, and create holes for perches and hanging. Then fill it with birdseed or create a more decorative feeder by adding a vase or other decorative elements.