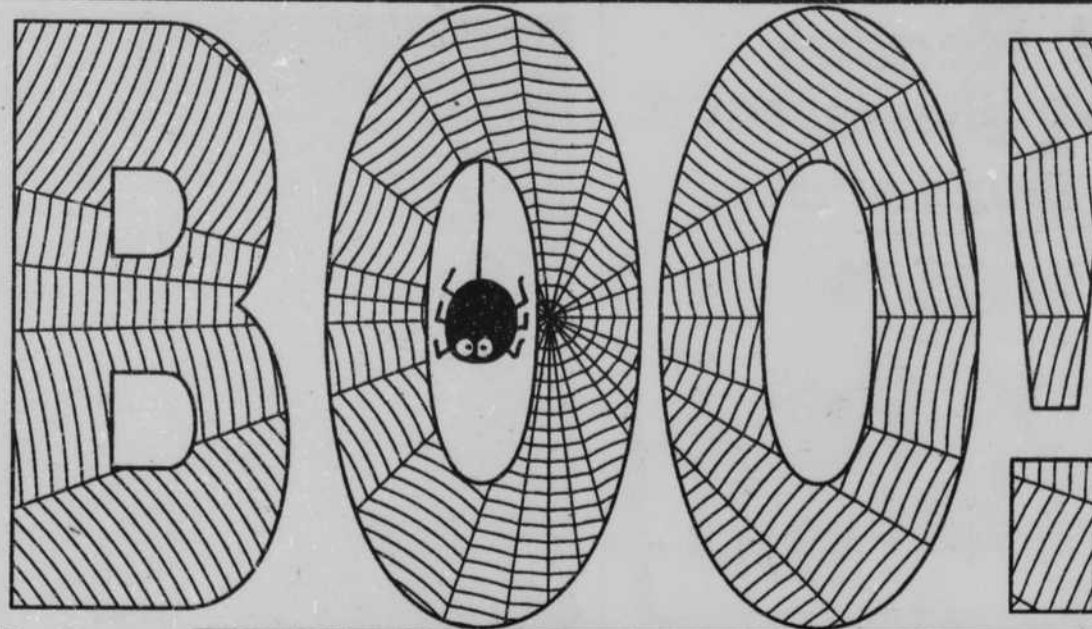


diversion



By Gretchen Boehr
Senior Reporter

According to Linus in the Halloween TV special, "It's the Great Pumpkin, Charlie Brown," the Great Pumpkin visits only the most sincere pumpkin patches on Halloween night.

A very sincere, four-acre pumpkin patch owned by Tim Curtis, peacefully awaits Halloween night three miles northeast of Milford.

But only 30 or 40 pumpkins remain.

"We're about sold out," said Curtis, who has been growing pumpkins on his farm for the past 10 years.

Curtis said he raises roughly 10 tons of pumpkins per acre which he sells to seven Lincoln grocery stores.

Curtis said sometimes he and his wife, Sharon, have people come out to their farm to buy pumpkins.

"And we have a nursing home coming out this week," he said. "But we're mostly in the wholesale market."

This year Curtis, 32, said he increased his one-acre patch to four acres.

He said the pumpkins were doing "fantastic" this year because they grow well in hot weather.

Curtis decided to grow pumpkins as an alternate crop because they "seemed to be in demand," he said.

Most people buy pumpkins for decoration and for their children to carve, he said, and a few people use them to make pumpkin pie.

This year, Curtis said, his expenses went up because he added hired help and tried more expensive varieties of pumpkin seeds.

Curtis raises the Ghost Rider and Jack 'O Lantern varieties. Ghost Rider seed is a more expensive seed, he said.

"The Jack 'O' Lantern variety is the old standard and the Ghost Rider is a little bit of a darker orange," he said.

Some people like their pumpkins orange and others like them yellow, he said, so he planted some of each to please everyone.

Curtis said his wife and two children don't make many Jack 'O Lanterns or pumpkin pies.

"We grow 'em and we're sick of them," Curtis said.

Growing pumpkins is a lot of work, he said, especially loading them on and off trailers and hauling them to market.



Al Schaben/ Daily Nebraskan

Evan Curtis, 2, weighs a small pumpkin, only a portion of the 60,000 pounds of pumpkin the Curtis' have sold. Evan is pictured with parents, Tim and Sharon, and brother Cori, 1, at the Curtis farm northwest of Milford.

"Sometimes it feels like we're burning the candle at both ends and all we're getting is burned," Curtis said.

Curtis farms about 500 acres in addition to the pumpkin field, he said. He grows milo, beans, wheat, oats and alfalfa.

Most of the pumpkins Curtis grows are about 10 pounds and as big as a basketball. He said he doesn't like big pumpkin varieties because they sometimes grow into weird shapes.

"People don't buy them because pumpkins are sold by the pound," he said. "They think why spend more than \$6 for one pumpkin when you could buy 10 or 12 smaller ones."

Curtis said he likes selling pumpkins because it's different, and that he likes the holiday spirit associated with his patch.

"It's a seasonal thing like selling Christmas trees," he said. "It's kind of neat to watch kids run around in the pumpkin patch because they

get so excited."

The Curtis family has two children, Evan, 2, and Cori, 1.

"They like to roll the small decorative pumpkins around in the house," he said.

Sharon, Curtis' wife, said she enjoys the pumpkin patch, too.

"You get attached to certain pumpkins that nobody buys and you feel sorry for them," she said. "It's sort of like Charlie Brown's Christmas tree that nobody wanted."