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As fall approaches on the farm, we gather in the pumpkins. I've experimented with many varieties, and settled on this one. It's called the Old Time Tennessee Pumpkin. A local family gave me a start many years ago, and when it's fed to livestock they call it the Cow Pumpkin or Hog Pumpkin.

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I planted a row next to five rows of Connecticut Field and Howden, your standard Jack-o-lantern varieties. Besides being a better keeper and the best for pies, the one row out-yielded the other five. And I like the tan color.

Studying up, I found it to be similar to a variety from Southern France called Musquee de Provence, and it's also quite like the Long Island Cheese Pumpkin. These are both in the Moschata family of cucurbitus, a close relative of butternuts. That expains its qualities of taste, storage and production, and the similar color.

If grown near butternuts, you'll get some crossing. Another Moschata variety we grow is an Italian heirloom called Trombocini. It's used as a summer squash when small, and makes a long, skinny shape when mature. We've had a bit of crossing.

We made a mistake/discovery this summer. I asked the interns to pick the crookneck squashes, but they didn't stop there, and picked two bushels of immature butternuts. I sent them to our CSA customers anyway. They loved them and want them again next year.

I sorted out some pretty ones and set them around my cabin. They keep all winter, and towards the end of May, we split them, scoop out the seeds and sprinkle them six inches apart in rows three-and-a-half-feet wide. After a few cultivations, the vigorous vines take over and all we do is harvest. Five heaping truckloads came off of eight, 300-foot long rows.

The butternut family seems more resistant to insects. Because they root along the vine, they can survive squash borers, which attack the stem. You can hill up around the stem, or wrap it in burlap, to prevent the pretty moth from laying her eggs there.

Don't plant too early, like I have done. Nobody wants pumpkins in August, and they like hot weather anyway. For an orange color, we grow Jack-Be-Little, which make cute displays in the house. Another fun one to grow and save seed from, is Cushaw, a large, green variety that does not cross with other squashes. They make good pies and also decorative.

Autumn begins when the pumpkins come in. Since we farm with no irrigation, old tractors and only compost for fertilizer, I call it old time farming. So it's natural that I love to grow the Old Time Tennessee Pumpkin.