KANSAS STATE UNIVERSITY | Extension
Meadowlark District

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Laura Phillips
District Extension Agent, Horticulture

What to do with pumpkins after Halloween

Many of us enjoy carving pumpkins for Halloween décor. But after Halloween is over, what do you do with the pumpkin? Many people throw them in the garbage, and an estimated 1 billion pounds of pumpkins end up in landfills each year.

Not only does 1 billion pounds of pumpkin take up valuable space in landfills, but it can actually harm the environment. When compostable items like pumpkins are put into landfills, they decompose differently than they would in a compost pile. In landfills, the waste is sealed underground with limited oxygen. So, the microorganisms that break down the pumpkins and other organic material have to do so in an anerobic environment (without oxygen). This means that the decomposition process will create methane, a potent greenhouse gas that contributes to climate change. With how many pumpkins are thrown away, we can expect over 80 million pounds of methane gas to be released into our atmosphere.

You can help prevent the buildup of methane gas by forgoing the landfill and allowing it to decompose naturally. Before composting a pumpkin, be sure to remove all decorations and lights that are not compostable. If you have a garden, you can chop up the pumpkin and mix it into your garden's soil. You can also add the entire pumpkin to a compost pile if you have access to one. A decomposing pumpkin can add nitrogen, phosphorus, and potassium, all essential nutrients for plants to your soil.