

Dear Aggie, I've seen various colored pumpkins around Halloween, but I didn't know they had different meanings!

The classic, bright colored squash that marks the turning of summer to fall. Pumpkins are a hallmark of autumn and all things spooky. Though our minds immediately drift to the vibrant orange varieties when we hear the word 'pumpkin', it's no secret that pumpkins and squash come in all different kinds of colors. While orange is the most popular, you've probably seen a wide range of pigments at the store, your local pumpkin patch, and on people's porches. White, green, yellow, tan, even pink, red, and blue can occur naturally, but many people also enjoy painting their pumpkins and many of these colors have specific meanings!

Similarly to a pink ribbon signifying breast cancer awareness, pink pumpkins may serve the same purpose. A home with a pink pumpkin may mean that a house member is a survivor, has been affected by the disease, or is offering a symbol of solidarity. Alternatively, the Purple Pumpkin Project was started by a parent of a child with epilepsy to raise money and awareness for the Epilepsy Foundation. The hope was that people would ask about the purple pumpkins, giving the opportunity to spread awareness and education about epilepsy.

The color teal, such as carrying a teal bucket while trick-or-treating, indicates food allergies. Meaning homes with teal painted pumpkins out front may be communicating that they have allergen-friendly options for trick-or-treaters. This could include treats that are gluten, dairy, and nut free or perhaps they have toys on hand instead of candy! Blue pumpkins are associated with autism awareness. A child carrying a blue bucket may be a visual cue that they have sensory sensitivities, while a home with a blue pumpkin outside may indicate they are not participating in trick-or-treating due to autistic residents in the home or could be showing support for those on the spectrum.

More traditional colors, such as orange, red, white, yellow, and green do not carry specific significance. Usually just used as decorations, these varieties are popular, and you will see many homes featuring these hues as folks prepare for fall. The more discernable colors that stand out, however; usually have deeper meanings and can represent various sentiments from the household touting them. While many of these unique colors such as blue and pink do grow on the vine depending on the variety, it is more likely colored pumpkins are displaying a certain meaning if they are painted. You may have seen many different colors in years past. Did you know that the different pigments had associated meanings? If not, you do now! So, keep your eyes peeled this spooky season and see if you can find any colored pumpkins for a cause.

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