

Pumpkin Carving & Seed Saving Extravaganza

Berkshire Athenaeum

Children

|

Tweens (10-12)

|

Teens

|

Young Adult

|

Adults

Pumpkin Carving & Seed Saving Extravaganza

Sep 11, 2018

\$251-500

\$\$

Byline

Alexander Geller, Outreach Librarian, Berkshire Athenaeum

On Saturday, October 27, 2017, the Berkshire Athenaeum, Pittsfield's public library, welcomed over 200 parents and children for our inaugural pumpkin carving party. We provided the pumpkins, carving tools and stencils.

We also used the event to introduce the joy and benefit of seed saving and our newest library initiative, the [Berkshire Seed Library](#). We are hosting this event again on October 27, 2018.

Advanced Planning

The pumpkin carving party was the brainchild of our Berkshire Seed Library committee, which formed over the summer of 2017. The committee included: a library representative; the director of [Alchemy Initiative](#), an organization that uses food for creative community building; the head gardener and outreach coordinator for [Hancock Shaker Village](#), a living history museum and working farm; and other community farmers.

We first began planning the program during our August 2017 meeting, where we discussed a seed donation day in October to begin stocking our donation-based seed library. Because of the timing, we thought it would be great to host a pumpkin carving party for families — come for the pumpkins, stay to save seeds. The library reached out to local farms for the pumpkins, and other members of the committee helped secure volunteers, face painters, decorations and direct promotion.

Marketing

We created fliers, sent out a press release, developed a social media campaign and led a direct email marketing campaign.

Budgeting

We purchased more than 250 pumpkins from [Taft Farms](#), a family-owned farm in Great Barrington, at the very generous rate of \$200 — below the wholesale price. To eliminate delivery costs, we picked up the pumpkins ourselves on two flat-bed trucks.

We also spent around \$90 on stencils and carving utensils.

Day-of-event Activity

The night before the event, two volunteers and two library staff members prepared the auditorium and children's terrace. We placed all the pumpkins in our children's terrace to create a makeshift pumpkin patch. We set up a route from the terrace to our auditorium so parents and kids could pick their pumpkin and then take it to our auditorium to carve.

We set up 15 tables, taping down newspaper to help with clean-up, and placed trash cans by every table. We unpacked the stencils and utensils.

On the day of the event, we had our 10 volunteers split responsibilities. Two volunteers worked in the pumpkin patch and directed traffic. Five volunteers helped with pumpkin carving, and three others worked with crowd control and seed-saving instruction.

Program Execution

We had over 200 people attend the event. It was the largest library-led, family-oriented program the Athenaeum has hosted in a decade. (**View photos under Photo Slideshow at right.**) The Berkshire Eagle, our local paper, came to take pictures.

Since we had so many people and only so much room, we had to have families rotate in and out of the pumpkin carving area. The children's library staff and volunteers provided Halloween-themed crafts, a storytime, face painting and coloring books for families waiting to carve their pumpkins. We had plenty of staff and volunteers to make the event as stress-free as possible.

Our expert seed savers encouraged families to not throw out their seeds with the pumpkin guts and showed those interested how to dry the seeds for seed saving. We saved all the pumpkin scraps to feed to Hancock Shaker Village's pigs. This was a great opportunity to discuss future programming ideas with our community and an awesome way to kick off a seed library.

We had many participants who were first-time library users and were thankful for family-oriented programs. Many participants took pumpkin seeds home with them (which helped with clean-up!) and were interested in attending more seed-saving and gardening workshop opportunities.

The party was a great way to kick off the Berkshire Seed Library, a partnership among the Berkshire Athenaeum, Alchemy Initiative and Hancock Shaker Village. Alchemy Initiative is an agriculture-based youth development program that builds community and empowers young people, and the Shakers were the first people to sell seeds in catalogs, so this partnership opportunity is an excellent opportunity to get people of all ages interested in gardening and agriculture, while also exploring the history of seed-collecting and sharing.

We plan on hosting pumpkin carving parties annually.

Advice

If you are thinking about starting a seed library, a pumpkin carving event is a great way to get the community on board. Both the clean-up and costs were minimal because we were able to develop strong partnerships, which continue to pay off today!

[Did you try this program at your library? Share your experience using this form.](#)

Supporting Materials

[Download this Program as a PDF](#)

- [Programming Librarian Facebook Group](#)

Slideshow Images



Image



Image



More Programs

Dec 4, 2017

Children (9 and under)+ | \$

[Image](#)



Painted Pumpkin Party

Audiences:

Audience

Children (9 and under)

Teens (13-16)

Young Adult (17 - 20)

Adults (21 and up)

Intergenerational

Mar 17, 2018

+ |

Creating a Community Garden with Impact

Audiences:

May 21, 2015

Adults (21 and up)+ | \$\$\$

[Image](#)



Get Started Gardening at Your Library

Audiences:

Adults (21 and up)

Intergenerational

Jun 8, 2015

Adults (21 and up)+ | \$\$

[Image](#)



Seed Swap

Audiences:

Adults (21 and up)