

# Pumpkin Patch & Corn Maze

**SEPTEMBER 28<sup>TH</sup> TO OCTOBER 31<sup>ST</sup>, 2019**  
 Open daily 9am-4pm  
 Bring the family  
 No admission fee  
 Visit our farm animals  
 Free tram ride tour (weekends only)  
 Picnic on the grounds

Amador Flower Farm & Nursery  
 AmadorFlowerFarm.com  
 (209) 245-6660

# Get the Led Out

## THE AMERICAN LED ZEPPELIN

<b>Tuesday</b> <b>October 8, 2019</b>	<b>CREST THEATRE</b> 1013 K Street, Sacramento, CA 95814
Doors: 6:30 PM Show: 7:30 PM All seats are reserved Ticket price \$37-\$57	<b>Tickets available:</b> Online • <a href="http://www.crestsacramento.com">www.crestsacramento.com</a> By phone • 1-877-987-6487 In person • Crest Box Office

Visit us online: [www.crestsacramento.com](http://www.crestsacramento.com)

EXOTIC PLANTS

The Home of Indoor Plants, Services & Decor

"We've brought joy to homes and business for 47 years and we don't plan on stopping anytime soon."

-Kifumi Keppler, Owner

Everyone knows us for our plant store and our maintenance services, but you might not know that we create custom moss art for any space.

[www.exoticplantsltd.com](http://www.exoticplantsltd.com)

**47 YEAR ANNIVERSARY PARTY SEPTEMBER 28TH, 12-5PM**

1525 FULTON AVE. SAC., CA 95825 | 916.922.4769 | @EXOTICPLANTSLTD

# GARDEN

# Sad tomato

## It's a mixed bag for growers of heirloom varieties

BY **DEBBIE ARRINGTON**



Farmer Fred Hoffman is harvesting plenty of tomatoes this fall, but some gardeners aren't as fortunate.

ever got going. A farmer friend “attributed this to a storm that occurred early on in the plants’ life that fooled them into thinking that it was already winter,” Frichette said.

“It’s been a weird year,” said Michelle Jackson, who battled bugs and wilt all summer. Her Brandy Boy yielded just two tomatoes, although her Sun Gold and Sweet 100 produced several quarts of cherry tomatoes.

Kitty Bolte planted a dozen varieties and got a wide range of results. “I had good luck with Amish Paste and the cherries,” she said. “Brandywines did terribly, [they] rotted before they ripened. San Marzanos were OK, but seemed more prone to blossom end rot than the Amish Paste. All the others were fun and flavorful, but not especially prolific.”

The difference between a bad and a decent crop seemed to come down to variety. Plants in the same garden bore vastly different harvests.

“Persimmon [an orange heirloom tomato] had absolutely zero tomatoes,” said South Land Park’s Ken Wing, who pulled the plant on Labor Day. “My other varieties—Juliet, Jetsetter F1 and Yellow Pear—did great.”

By contrast, Colene Rauh of Orangevale had a great tomato year. “By far, our favorite tomato—and it grew better than ever this year—is the Bull’s Heart,” she said. “Great for sauces, sandwiches, salads; you name it. As far as the cherry-type tomatoes, our other favorite is Sun Sugar; very prolific. One year, when we didn’t get a freeze, they grew into January!”

With our current mild fall weather, healthy tomato plants may keep going through the holidays.

“This will be a long tomato season,” noted radio host Farmer Fred Hoffman, who still has many green tomatoes in his Folsom garden. “I predict tomato salads at every Thanksgiving dinner table.”

**This was a tough summer in the Big Tomato.** For many growers, Sacramento’s favorite crop struggled.

This lack of tomatoes left gardeners scratching their heads and farmers recalculating their yields.

A combination of weather conditions—too cold and wet early, too hot late—seemed to confuse plants. Instead of setting a steady supply of fruit, some tomato vines just sulked.

As of Aug. 24, tomato shipments were running 21.1% behind the 2018 pace, reports the Processing Tomato Advisory Board. Although farmers expect to pick up some slack in September, the total California processing tomato crop is forecast to be down 4.1% from last year.

Processing tomatoes—used for canned tomatoes and tomato paste—are supposed to be the easy ones to grow. If they’re having difficulty, what about heirlooms?

This season elicited more groans than big smiles.

“This was not a good year for me,” said Peter Frichette, Sacramento’s homegrown tomato king. “Only one person that I have spoken with said that he had a good year. Most others just said that it seemed below average.”

Frichette, whose Greenhaven garden usually produces bushels of tomatoes, saw two of his usually reliable Early Girls shut down before they

Debbie Arrington, an award-winning garden writer and lifelong gardener, is co-creator of the Sacramento Digs Gardening blog and website.