



Pumpkins

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Rick Gush

Friday, October 16, 2009

Photo by Rick Gush This weekend I picked my first pumpkin. I really like growing big squashes, but my space is so limited that I have to hold myself back and just grow a few plants. This year, I planted mostly this nice green and yellow pumpkin called Tonda Padana, which means "the round type from the Po River Valley."

My squashes don't grow as big as those grown near Milan, where the fruits of this variety often weigh about 40 pounds. In the fall and winter, the markets in the northern valley all sell slices of these squashes. Here in Liguria, we don't see Tonda Padana squashes in the markets because the local growers produce other varieties.

It sort of amuses me that my neighbors here ignore this variety in their own vegetable gardens and make condescending comments about the unusual fruits in our garden. A few years ago I grew a Big Max pumpkin from seeds I got in California, and the pumpkin was a bit larger than a beach ball. That did impress the neighbors, and I earned some extra respect points by passing out big slices.

I also gave seeds from that fruit to a number of gardening friends, but nobody actually got around to planting them, preferring instead their own tried and true local varieties. Italian gardeners are hard to impress, and it's almost impossible to get them to try new things.

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