Celebrate autumn at Farmers Market

Weekend festival offers produce, plants, decorations

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Fall will show its true colors at AutumnFest.

There's just something about fall that makes it some people's favorite season.

Jami Jann is one of those huge autumn fans gearing up for the change of seasons. The Greenville mother of three said she loves almost everything about this time — from the cooler, crisp temperatures to the apple picking and pumpkin decorating.

Jann, who was recently at the Greenville State Farmers Market doing some afternoon shopping, plans to return this weekend with her family for the 2011 AutumnFest.

"We're going to get our fall pansies and fall mums," she said.

AutumnFest runs Friday through Sunday. Now in its 11th year, it will feature a wide selection of locally grown and seasonal produce, as well as flowers and plants.

The festival is one of three such events hosted and sponsored by the South Carolina Department of Agriculture. The other two will take place next month in Columbia and Florence.

"It's a huge event," said Ardona Summerall, festival coordinator. Between 25 and 30 vendors will be selling everything from ripe apples and blueberries to hardy pansies, mums and ornamental cabbage.

YOU CAN GO:

What: The 2011 AutumnFest
When: Friday and Saturday from 8 a.m.-6 p.m. and Sunday from 10 a.m.-4 p.m.
Where: Greenville State Farmers Market, 1354 Rutherford Road
How much: Admission and parking are free
For more: Call 864-244-4023

Gregg DeShields of DeShields Farm and Greenhouse in Greer, will offer a variety of edible and decorative items, including blue and red hubbard squash, along with gourds resembling apples, snakes and other shapes.

"The blue hubbard, you can cook it like you do a butternut or acorn squash," DeShields said. "You can take it and make a casseroles out of it, or you can just put it in the oven and bake it."

At the festival, visitors also can check out pumpkins

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of all shapes and sizes: from miniature the fist-sized minis with painted faces to much heftier carved jack-'o'-lanterns.

"Children love those," Summerall said.

There's also a host of garden and seasonal accessories, including handmade wreaths, bales of straw, decorative plant containers and garden statues.

"We do have a brand-new vendor this year that will be selling wood furniture like swings and Adirondack chairs," Summerall said.

And whether or not you have a green thumb, the festival is a great way to simply celebrate the season while reaping lots of gardening and decorating ideas, Summerall said.

"Usually there are some pretty good deals," said Karen Sharp of Greenville, who has attended previous autumn festivals. Sharp said she especially appreciates vendors' wealth of knowledge about plants and gardening.

"The people who sell the plants are always very helpful with any kind of questions as far as what might grow well in certain places," she said.

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