

UTAH GIANT PUMPKIN GROWERS

The Pumpkin Vine

June 2008

VOL IV ISSUE II

So how are all your plants doing? Hopefully you're off to a great start. We've heard that our late wet spring has put some people behind of where they would like to be. We've that others are doing well.

If you were not able to make it to one of our spring seminars then you missed out on a lot of good information. Kenny Blair, Kevin Card, Andrew Israelsen, Gordon Tanner and Ray Tolman all helped to put together the seminars and share growing information. We had new how to grow video's. Kenny Blair told us how he grows his pumpkins. One of the most important things Kenny mentioned was getting a soil test and how to amend your soil using your soil test recommendations. He uses Western Laboratories in Parma Idaho. <http://www.westernlaboratories.com/>
This is who Jack LaRue and several top growers in the Pacific Northwest use for their soil testing.

Other helps were to use a season long grub-x type product with Merit as the active ingredient. This helps protect against squash bugs. Do NOT use this on anything that you'll eat from your garden.

Kenny and other growers use "whizzer" type sprinklers to water and cool their plants. This type rotate in a circle as the water flows out from it giving an even circular pattern. Adjusting the water pressure changes area covered. They have bright yellow top with a back nozzle. They are a 1/2 screw mount. They are available at Home Depot but can be difficult to find in the store.



Kenny also uses a battery operated timer that you attach to a water spigot and then the watering hose goes onto the timer. The timer is adjustable so that you can water many times a day. During the hot summer days he is able to set it so that it cycles, 1 min. on 10 min. off, so the whizzers' acts as a cooling system for the plants.

Another important thing we learned at the seminars was that Mycorrhiza Fungi is something that a most top growers use. It is a mixture of beneficial fungi that form a symbiotic relationship with the roots of the plant that enables the plant to increase nutrient uptake substantially. There are two places that we know of that sell Mycorrhiza Fungi. One is <http://www.hollandsgiants.com/> 1-253-840-3575 has is at Mycorrhizae Soil Inoculat BioGrow Endo Plus and the other <http://www.reforest.com/> 1-800-784-4769 as Symbios. There are probably other places that sell Mycorrhiza Fungi but if you go elsewhere be sure to look for Endomycorrhiza Fungi and not Ectomycorrhiza Fungi which if for woody plants and trees.

Joel Holland also sells other giant pumpkin supplies at hollandsgiants. His "How to do Stuff in the Pumpkin Patch" is probably the best one out there. Yes it cost money and all adds up but compared to many other hobbies out there it's not so bad.

For Spider Mites, most growers use Isotox or Seven.

For Powdery Mildew prevention there are lots of products on the market and some are really expensive. Some growers have been successful with seaweed and fish fertilizer. Others use both chemical products. Some use both. Chemical products often used include Daconyl, Compass and Banner Max. It is a good idea to rotate products in a regular schedule to prevent immunity build up to the sprays we use. The last thing we need is a new super strain of Powdery Mildew that is resistant to all of the know products out there.

Be sure to read and follow the instructions on the label and use the proper personal protective equipment required to use the products safely and avoid damage to yourself and your plants. Be careful not to apply sprays when it is hot outside. This can damage plant leaves. Typically growers spray between sunset and darkness to avoid damage to their plants.

Pollinating

Each year we get new growers added to the UGPG ranks. So we thought it would be a good idea to go over giant pumpkin pollinating. Dill's Atlantic Giant pumpkins were developed specifically for size through years of careful pollinating. Growers today continue this tradition in hopes of 1) being able to produce even larger pumpkin and 2) not ruining the great genetics that are already here. Great genetic can be ruined by making an open pollination where bees are allowed to pollinate the female flower. The problem with this is any pollen from any nearby pumpkin or squash can be transmitted to the female. The resulting seeds from this pumpkin will have half unknown genetics, which is enough to really mess up all future pumpkins. To properly pollinate both the female (the one with the little pumpkin under it) and the male (the one with the long stem) must be covered the night before they are going to open. Flowers will open the next day when they develop orange at the tip and pucker a little. A paper cup, twist tie or a piece of a nylon stocking can cover the flowers. Male flowers can be cut the night before and brought into the house to prevent cross contamination. It is best to use 3 or more male flowers (all from one plant) to pollinate one female. But successful pollination can be achieved with just one male. Morning is the best time to pollinate. With the male in hand at the female flower, remove the coverings. Carefully tear the petal off the male flower to reveal the pollen (located on the stamen). Gently rub the pollen all around the inside of the female flower which is call the stigma. Controlling pollinations ensures current and future growers a larger choice of high quality seeds.

Giant Pumpkin Garden Talk

Ray Tolman and Kenny Blair will be giving a Giant Pumpkin Garden Talk at Brigham Young Park on the south east corner of State St and 2nd Avenue in Salt Lake City (just East of Church Office Building). The date is Aug 6th Wednesday and the time is 7:30 pm. Tickets are not required and the cost is free. But if you plan on attending you should arrive early to ensure that you get a seat. You can also bring your own lawn chairs or a blanket to sit on. The talk will last approximately one hour.

The UGPG 2008 PATCH TOUR

This year's patch tour will be on Saturday Aug. 9th. For more information see the separate patch tour page that came with the news letter.

2008 WEIGH OFF's

Our main weigh-off this year will be just like last year's. It is at Rockin' E Country Store in Woods Cross. Registration starts at 8 am. The weigh off will start at Noon.

The UGPG is growing each year. It is rewarding and fun to watch especially to the UGPG leader. But it also creates some problems and more work. Last year we had 62 pumpkins, 4 long gourds and one watermelon. We expect to have more entries this year. Please only bring one or two pumpkins to the weigh off. If you have more, that you would like weighed, let us know and we can work something out, such as, having you bring them to Rockin' E the day before the weigh off. Also let us know if you want on bringing something besides a pumpkin or a squash, so we can approve it and work it into the weigh off flow.

Along a similar line of thought ...

Enter it only if you grow it

We haven't had any complaints about this but a lot of other clubs have. And we can read about it every year on bigpumpkins.com message boards.

Yes its fun to enter a pumpkin in your _____, fill in the blank spouse, child, or grandchild name. They may have even helped you in the patch. But if someone else gets pushed further down in the ranks and prize money then it's easy to see how feelings could be hurt, complaints made, people taking side etc. All this could then lead to problems for all of us as individual growers and for the club.

In the past, more than a few years ago, with Utah weigh offs it's wasn't a problem since there was little if any prize money, prizes only going to the top 3 pumpkin and not that many entries. In 2006 at our first UGPG weigh off Gordon Tanner could have taken 2nd, 3rd & 5th if he had entered pumpkins in his family member's names. Did you know that his wife does almost all of his pollinations in the patch? When in doubt take the high road, it will help us all now and in the long run.

If you want to take pictures with all the grandchildren each with "their own" pumpkin please find another time and way than entering all of them into weigh off. We all know that growing a pumpkin can take a lot of work. So let's be kind to our fellow growers and not cause problems for the club by only entering a pumpkin if you grew it. This has been a problem with other clubs. If you have any ideas or comments let us know so we can address them.

How Would You Like to Win Less Money at this Year's Weigh Off?

None of us would like that. In fact we'd all like to win more. But did you know that all the prize money that is given away at the weigh off comes from local businesses that sponsor us. This year it looks like our total prize money will be less that was last year. We didn't have a Bigpumpkins.com seed auction last winter. So if anyone knows of any people or companies that could help sponsor us or if you have any other fund raising ideas for the group, contact Ray Tolman at 295-7019.

Lifting and Transporting Giant Pumpkins

The first rule of giant pumpkin transportation is to always be safe! The 2nd rule is to always bring your pumpkin to the weigh off on a pallet.

A lifting tarp is a nice way to get your pumpkin out of the patch onto a truck or trailer. Smaller giant pumpkins can be lifted with a blanket or tarp. Using a blanket or a tarp is much easier than trying to lift a pumpkin without one. Tip the pumpkin on its side then stuff the tarp under it. Then tip the pumpkin to the opposite side and pull the tarp out. A little adjusting might be necessary to center the pumpkin. Roll up excess edges of the tarp to form a handle. For a medium sized giant pumpkin a blanket probably won't cut it. But a tarp with handles will do the job just fine. For pumpkins up to 500 lbs a 6'x8' tarp folded in half will do the job. For pumpkins 500-800 lbs a 10'x12' tarp folded in half twice to 5'x6' will be adequate. To add handles to your tarp you'll need a grommet kit, ¼-3/8 inch rope and some ½ inch pvc pipe 6 inches in length. You can get grommet kits at

Wal-mart. To start fold the tarp to its final size and secure all the layers together with grommets, keeping in mind where you place the grommets is where the handles will go.

Loop the rope through a section of pvc pipe and then through two adjacent grommets.



For pumpkins over 800 lbs you can go to a bigger regular tarp with more layers but you might want to consider buying or borrowing a specially made pumpkin lifting tarp. Here are two web sites where they can be purchased.
<http://www.howarddill.com>
<http://www.pandpseed.com>

Lifting a really large pumpkin can be difficult using a tarp; so many growers are shifting to a tripod and hoist system. Tripods are normally made of wood (4x4s) or steel pipe. The tripod has to be tall enough to fit the hoist, pumpkin, pallet and truck or trailer with underneath it and wide enough for the truck or trailer.

Here are two links that use a tripod to lift a giant pumpkin.

www.team-pumpkin.org/images/teampumpkintripod.pps

www.youtube.com/watch?v=8xOfPO6Mu1Q

Be sure to strap the pumpkin down to the pallet and vehicle. If you have to make a quick stop a pumpkin that isn't tied down will move until something stops it. This can result in a damaged vehicle and a damaged pumpkin. There are stories out there with pictures of damaged truck cabs & pumpkins, pumpkins smashed on the ground after falling off the back of a truck or trailer.

UGPG FALL MEETING

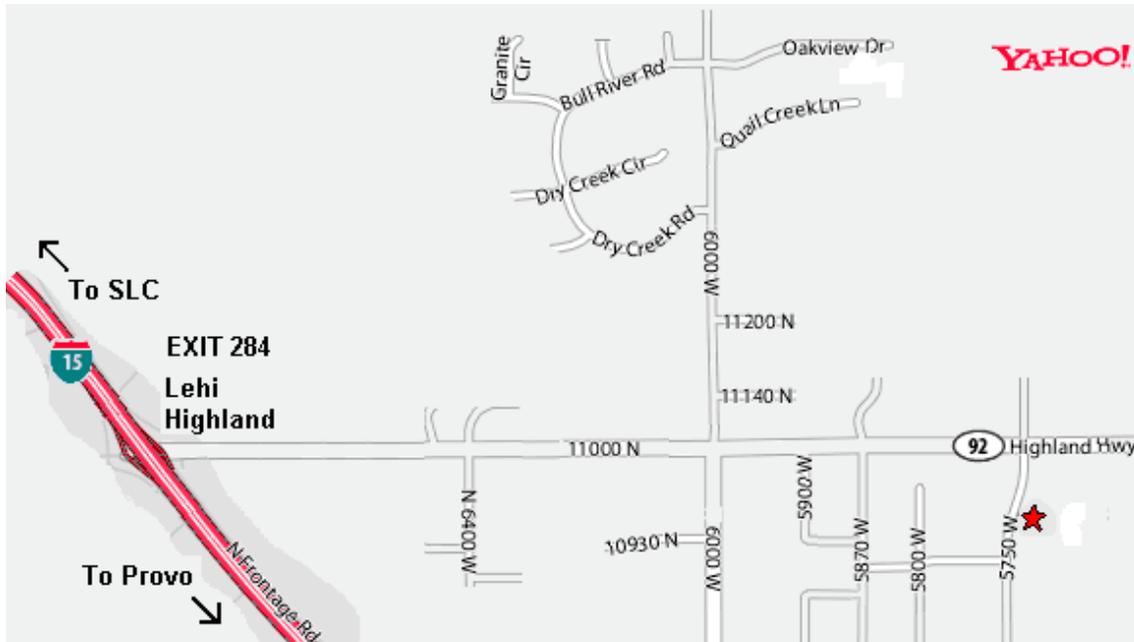
In November the UGPG will be having a meeting to elect new officers and add new positions. The meeting is tentatively scheduled for November 8th. This is the 4th year that the current leadership has been in office working for the UGPG and its members. We think it is time for a little shake up. We figure you think it's time for a change to. We feel that we've gotten things off to a good start but we are also sure there are other people who would be willing to take a turn to help run the club who probably have some new ideas and better ways of doing some things. Don't worry we're not all going to leave and we don't expect a whole new group to just jump in and take over. But we'd like to spread out the work to involve more people.

Want to learn more or have questions?

Great place to learn more about growing giant pumpkin is www.bigpumpkins.com

UTAH GIANT PUMPKIN GROWERS
Third Annual Patch Tour & Lunch
Saturday, August 9th 2008
9:00 am

Kevin Card's patch at 9 am.
10894 N 5750 W
Highland, UT 84003
phone 756-5711



Maps will be handed out at Kevin's patch for the rest of the stops on the tour.

No free lunch this year.

But we will have lunch together as a group for any who would like to come.
Location is to be determined.



**Kenny & Adair Blair with their 2008 Utah Giant Pumpkin Growers first place 988.5 lb. pumpkin.
Hope to see you in the winner's circle this year!**

**UTAH GIANT PUMPKIN GROWERS
1393 S 750 EAST
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