

# UTAH GIANT PUMPKIN GROWERS

## *The Pumpkin Vine*

OCT 2008

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Gordon Tanner and his family with their 1054.5 lb. 2008 UGPG weigh off winning pumpkin.

Congratulation goes out to Gordon Tanner for winning this year's UGPG weigh off at Rockin' E with his 1054.5 pound pumpkin. It came in a little light to the chart but this is the first time Gordon has gone over 1000 lbs so he is happy with it. Gordon's pumpkin was grown off the 998 Pukos 05 seed. Kenny Blair an annual contender came in second with a nice 969.5 pound pumpkin. Andrew Israelsen rounded out the top three with a 893.5 pound pumpkin that is the 10<sup>th</sup> largest ever grown in Utah. See page 2 for the Utah all time top ten list. And here are the big ones that got away this year...



1170.5 Tanner 08 dmg

1086.5 Israelsen 08 dmg

917.5 Bowman 08 dmg

680 Blair 08 dmg

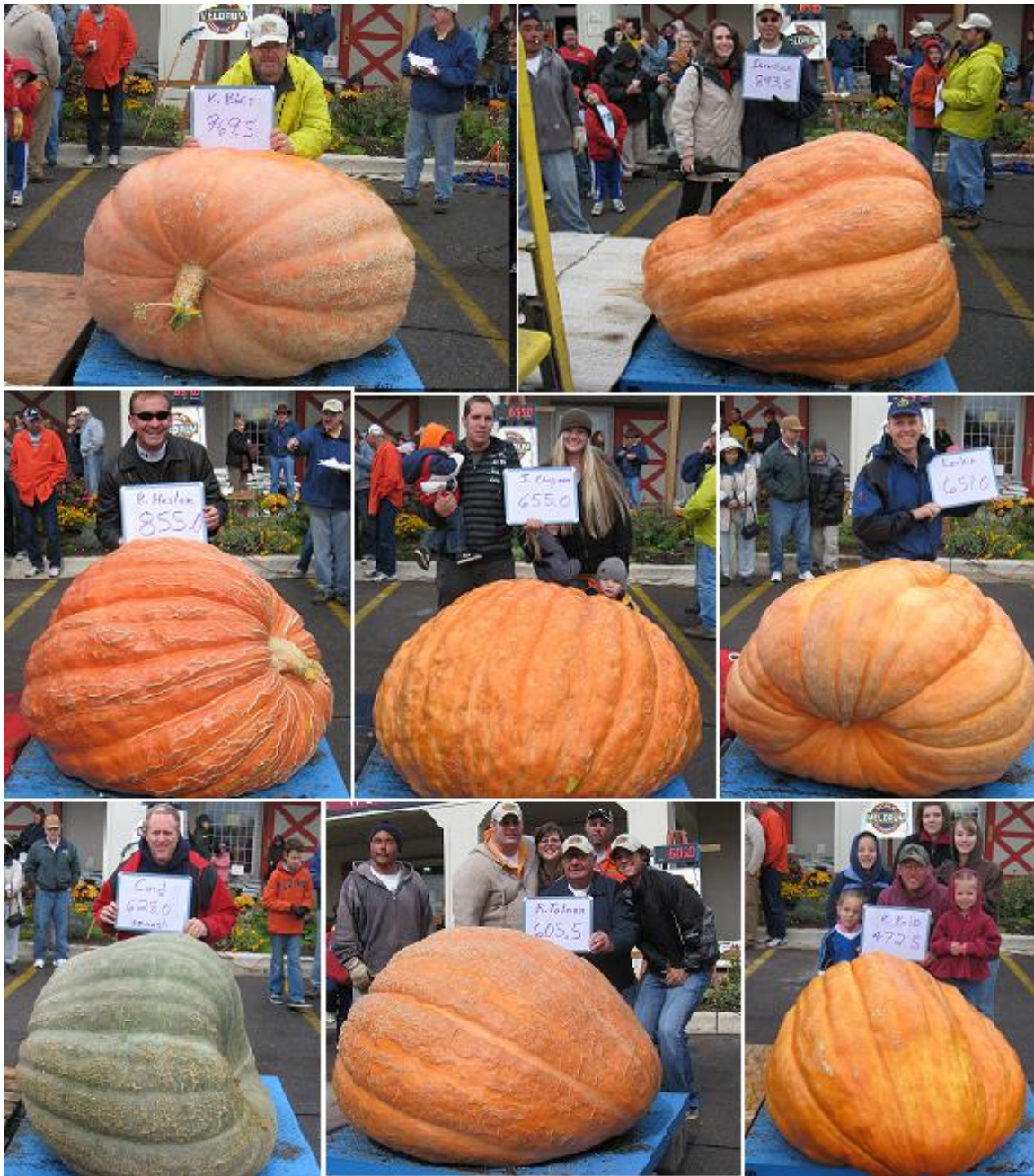
## 2008 WEIGH OFF RESULTS

	Grower	Weight					
			30	Eichers	Ron	290.5	
1	Tanner Gordon	1054.5	31	McConkie	Matt	286	
2	Blair Kenny	969.5	32	McSwain	Harry	273.5	
3	Israelsen Andrew	893.5	33	Hughes	Brent	264	
4	Haslam Russ	855	34	Burton	Bruce	250	
5	Chapman Joe	655	35	Lindsay	Roger	246	
6	Larkins Jim	651	36	Evans	Brent	231.5	
7	Card Kevin	628	sq	37	Carlson	Scott	206.5
8	Tolman Ray	605.5	38	Coster	Sam	126.5	
9	Card Ben	527					
10	Bradley David	517		Other Official Weights			
11	Eiting Mitch	514.5		Tanner	Gordon	796.5	
12	Kolb Ken	472.5		Clark	Dana	309	
13	King Ron	456.5		Miller	Chris	348	
14	VanBeek Elmer	451		Bradley	David	316	
15	Thatcher Richard	446		Lindsay	Rodger	239	
16	Miller Chris	430		Leavitt	Richard	228.5	
17	White Mike	426		Lindsay	Rodger	207.5	
18	Pruitt Joe	412.5		Kolb	Ken	206	
19	Richardson Kristin	407		McSwain	Phil	186	
20	Reed Delroy	389		Lindsay	Rodger	155.5	
21	Carlson Rick	386		Coster	Sam	67.5	
22	Clark Dana	376.5				sq	
23	Farmer Travis	360		Tanner	Gordon	1170.5	
24	Leavitt Richard	331.5		Israelsen	Andrew	1086.5	
25	Perry Lee	321		Bowman	Ross	917.5	
26	McSwain Phil	320.5		Blair	Kenny	680	
27	Fox Kyle & Carrie	308.5				dmg	
28	Slater William	305				dmg	
29	Nash Clint	301				dmg	
				sq= squash			

## Utah Top Ten Pumpkins of all time.

	Grower	Weight	Year	Site	Hometown
1	Blair Kenny	1104	2006	Rockin E	Bountiful
2	Tanner Gordon	1054.5	2008	Rockin E	Kaysville
3	Blair Kenny	988.5	2007	Rockin E	Bountiful
4	Blair Kenny	969.5	2008	Rockin E	Bountiful
5	Tanner Gordon	963.5	2006	Rockin E	Kaysville
6	Israelsen Andrew	948	2007	Rockin E	Taylorville
7	Tanner Gordon	932.5	2005	Gardner Village	Kaysville
8	Tanner Gordon	920.5	2005	Gardner Village	Kaysville
9	Tanner Gordon	906	2004	J&L Garden Center	Kaysville
10	Israelsen Andrew	893.5	2008	Rockin E	Taylorville

The 2008 the Utah top ten average weight is 968 lbs. In the year 2000 the top ten average was 586 lbs. So we've come a long ways in a just a few short years.



Pictures from the 2008 weigh off.

Top L-R: Kenny Blair 969.5 lbs., Andrew Israelsen 893.5 lbs.

Middle L-R: Russ Haslam 855 lbs., Joe Chapman 655 lbs., Jim Larkins 651 lbs.

Bottom L-R: Kevin Card 628 lbs., Ray Tolman 605.5, Ken Kolb 472.5 lbs. (Top 1<sup>st</sup> year grower)

For more pictures from the weigh off (soon to be posted) go to our web site:

<http://www.utahpumpkingrowers.com/>

## SAVING SEEDS

Remove the seeds from the pumpkin. Wash them thoroughly to remove all the guts. Wash them one more time with in a solution of 10% bleach and 90% water. This will disinfect them and help to kill any disease or mold that maybe be on them. Dry them off with a towel. Spread the seeds out on a table or screen to dry. Place the seeds so they aren't touching each other. Pick an area where they won't be disturbed by mice, cats, dogs, or children. Dry for three weeks then turn them over and dry for an additional three weeks. Identify or label them, place them in a zip lock baggy or jar, and store in a cool and dry place. A label consists of the fruit weigh, the growers last name, the year, the cross if known, and Sq. or squash if it was a squash. For example, 1054.5 Tanner 2008 (998 Pukos 05 x self) or 650 K.Card 2000 ( 848 McKenzie x 990 Hebb) Squash.

## HOW TO GROW A REALLY BIG PUMPKIN?

The old adage still holds true. Good Seed, Good Soil and Good Luck. We can all get good seeds now days. Good Luck can mean good weather. Many believe Good Luck also means hard work. But few will dispute that Good Luck is required to do well. That leaves us with Good Soil. Good soil is the missing ingredient for many growers. Here are a few quotes from to world class pumpkin growers on the topic:

Joe Jutras of Scituate, R.I., who broke the world record, 1,689 lbs. in 2007.

Reporter: "What's your secret?"

Joe: "TLC and hard work. There's no magic wand."

Thad Star from Pleasant Hill Oregon, 2007 and 2008 winner at the Half Moon Bay with 1,524 and 1,528 lb pumpkins.

Reporter: "What's the secret to your success?"

Starr;" You guys keep asking me that. There are no secrets other than working hard and heavily amending your soil, more than you think you need to, with composts and manure. ... The secret to growing big pumpkins is good soil. We really pamper them."

Walt and Brad Perham from Bothell WA. 1,467 lb Washington State record grown in 2008. From a newspaper article:

"They have their soil tested annually and follow detailed feeding and watering schedules. It amounts to several hours of work a day through the peak late-summer growing season when the giant plants can add up to 50 pounds a day. And it all starts with prizewinning genetics..."

Steve Connolly, Sharon Mass., 1569 lbs., 2008

From a newspaper article:

"In the middle of Connolly's front lawn sits a pumpkin nearly the size of a stagecoach or an old Volkswagen beetle. He calls it the "Beast from the East," and he's been coddling it for months. Connolly – who refers to the pumpkin in the feminine — feeds "her" a diet of liquid fish, seaweed and compost tea. In the fall he adds compost, grass clippings, guano and manure. At night, he covers the pumpkin with queen-sized blankets to keep it warm."

## FALL PATCH PREPERATIONS

Now is the time to amend the soil in you patch. At our yearly growing seminars in March new growers always ask about when and how much to fertilizer to use. The reply is always the same. Good soil is the main thing we need to be able to grow big pumpkins, and fertilizers can't make up for poor soil. Yes you may need to fertilize but great soil and a little fertilizer is the combination that we want, not ok soil and a lot of fertilizer.

A patch full of soft fluffy potting soil would be the ideal giant pumpkin growing medium. So if you can replace all the soil in your patch with potting soil, great good for you. For the rest of us probably the best thing you can do is add LOTS of organic matter. Organic matter is the best thing to add to any soil type, clay or sandy. Compost is best. If you can afford a load or two or more from your local government or nursery, then that is a great way to amend your soil. Making your own compost is the poor man's way to do this. You can have a compost pile all year long. Many growers add large amounts of shredded leaves and/or manures with some Nitrogen fertilizer in the fall and till them under. Most will break down over the winter and early spring just in time for spring planting. Other amendments that are generally good to add to your soil include ironite or azomite that add needed micronutrients and certain essential metals. A soil test can tell you what you need do add to balance your soil for growing giant pumpkins. Growing a large pumpkin does take time and effort. Even if you have great seeds and work hard in the patch you won't be able to grow a big pumpkin without good soil.

## FERTILIZERS

So what kind fertilizer should I be using and how much do I put on? If you ask ten different top growers you'll get ten different answers to this question. But the trend is away from chemical granular fertilizer and towards natural organic ones. No we haven't all joined green peace. But time and experience has shown giant pumpkin growers that natural fertilizers such as seaweed and fish help maintain balanced soil and chemical fertilizer tend to upset that balance. You can buy seaweed fertilizer at <http://www.neptunesharvest.com/> and <http://www.hollandsgiants.com/> We are not sure of any local stores that sell seaweed products. Liquid fish fertilizer can be found at Steve Reagan Company in Salt Lake, Home Depot, maybe Lowes and various places on-line.

A fairly typical fertilizing schedule might be 1-2 tablespoons of concentrated seaweed and 1 cup of liquid fish fertilizer mixed with water and sprayed once a week. Some growers might add some 20-20-20 or something similar to the mix. Others say to stay away from it. So who knows what is best. This hobby/sport is not an exact science. Fiddle with things and try to figure it out what works best for your patch. Also a newer trend for controlling powdery mildew is spraying one cup of milk per plant per week to the top and bottom sides of the leaf.

## MYCHORRHIZAL FUNGI

All top growers use mycorrhizal fungi. From Joel Holland's web site we learn that, "Mycorrhizal Fungi (M.F.) creates long filaments that penetrate plant roots and can increase the absorptive area of roots by 10 to 1,000 times. Several miles of filaments can be present in a thimbleful of soil and act as an extension of the root system known as a mycelial network. M.F. are able to absorb and transfer all 15 major macro and micronutrients necessary for plant growth. M.F. also inoculates the roots of pumpkin plants with the critical Endomycorrhizal Fungi that all cucurbits need to grow strong and resist disease."

You can find more information on and buy mycorrhizal fungi at <http://www.hollandsgiants.com/> and <http://www.reforest.com/> . If you are interested contacting other growers and getting together on a group buy is a great way to reduce cost on seaweed and mycorrhizal fungi.

## SOIL TEST

Getting your soil tested is usually a good idea, especially if you've encountered problems in the past. Fall is the recommended time to send in your soil sample for testing. A soil test will let you know if something is drastically wrong with your soil. We recommend Western Laboratories in Parma Idaho. The test you want is "Garden, Berries, Fruit Trees and Lawn Soil Report, Test 70". This tests your soil is tested for pH, texture, soluble salts (*ECe*), Cation Exchange Capacity (*true*), percent lime, percent organic matter, nitrates, ammonium, phosphorus (*alkaline soils – sodium bicarbonate extract, acid soils – Bray extract*), potassium, calcium, magnesium, sodium, zinc, iron, manganese, copper, sulfates and boron. Go to <http://www.westernlaboratories.com/> then soil/garden/submission form. You get a 10% discount (\$41.40) if you include your check with the sample. The testing also includes recommendations specific to giant pumpkins so you know what to add when you get your results.

## FALL MEETING CANCELED

We have decided that we will elect new UGPG officers in March of 2009 at our seminar meeting. Dates and times will be announced later.

## SEED AUCTION

The UGPG will hold a seed auction this off season on BigPumpkins.com to raise money for the club. The date has not been finalized. It will be a Friday or Saturday evening in December, January, or February. We will send out an email to let everyone know when it is going to be. This will be a good opportunity to buy some good seeds and support our club. If you have any great seeds that you'd like to donate let us know, thanks.

## 2009 MEMBERSHIP DUES

UGPG membership is from Jan 1<sup>st</sup> to Dec 31<sup>st</sup>. You can renew now if you'd like to. Be sure to put 2009 on your form. Membership is \$20. This gets you on the annual seed distribution that will take place next year. With a membership you also get 3 newsletters a year. And it also gets you into many UGPG activities during the year including the UGPG weigh off. Your membership needs to be postmarked by March 1<sup>st</sup> 2009 in order for you to be eligible for our 2009 seed distribution program.

If you signed up at the weigh off, and brought a pumpkin that was weighed there, then that was a 2008 membership (\$20) and you'll have to sign up again for 2009. But if you signed up at the weigh off and didn't bring a pumpkin then that is a 2009 membership. Some people signed up brought a pumpkin and also signed up for 2009. They paid \$40.

## SEEDS DISTRIBUTION

The UGPG seed distribution will occur in March 2009. We want you want to share your seeds with the group, so that our members will have lots of great seeds choices for next year, and also have extra seeds to pass out to friends and neighbors. We are looking for at least 200 seed per pumpkin or 100 packages with 2 seeds each. If you can package them yourself that would be great, if not we will take care of it. Send your seeds to Gordon Tanner at 1393 S 750 Kaysville, UT 84037. Remember to include the seed cross, for example 1104.5 Hester 2003 (898 Knauss 2001 x 845 Bobier 2000) Weight, Last Name, year (female [Seed] x male [pollinator])

Send your seeds to:

Gordon Tanner  
1393 S 750 Kaysville  
UT 84037-3006

UGPG GROWER PROFILE: Gordon Tanner, Kaysville Utah.

I started growing giant pumpkins in 1996 when I lived in Sandy. I saw some seeds in a store and picked them up. That year I grew two that were both under 75 lbs. I didn't know about any contests in the area so my brother and I painted them and put them out on the front porch for Halloween. That fall I saw some giant pumpkins at Wasatch Shadows Nursery in Sandy. They were a lot bigger than mine. I asked the guy there about them but I didn't get any contacts or information. Since then I have been growing giant pumpkin on and off when I could.

In 1997 I found a group of giant pumpkin growers on the internet. I had one small plant that year but didn't get a pumpkin. Then in 1998 I moved to the Seattle area and got to know several growers up there. Between those two things I learned a lot about growing. In 1998 I started several seeds by placing them in plastic pots in the oven with the light on. But my wife or I later turned on the oven to cook something. I melted the pots and killed the seeds. A nearby grower gave me a spare seedling that he had. It grew into a nice big plant but every pumpkin that I got on it, around a dozen or so, split between 75-100 lbs., except one that we picked in mid October that was about 75-80 lbs that we used for Halloween.

In 2000 I grew three plants at a community garden that was 30 minutes away from my house. I don't recommend this unless you don't have any other options. I would get up early and go to the patch do take care of the plants before I went to work. I entered my first pumpkin contest in early September at the Puyallup fair. My pumpkin there was 202 or 203 pounds. I weighed more than it did by a few pounds. But I still got \$50 because the fair bought my pumpkin to carve and display. I had two bigger pumpkins in the patch that I hoped would get even bigger. I took them to contest in mid October in Des Moines (WA. Not Iowa). The smaller not official one came in at 365 lbs and the bigger one was 520 lbs. 520 lbs got me 13<sup>th</sup> place, which was also last place. But I was happy. In 2002 we moved back to Utah in Kaysville. I went to the Thanksgiving Point weigh off that year and met many of the growers there. Somewhere in this time frame Bigpumpkins.com started up. I was a frequent visitor there and learned a lot about how to grow giant pumpkins. I think I've most every post ever put on that web site. It is a good place to gain growing knowledge.

In 2003, with a sod cutter, I cut up a big chunk of the lawn in the back yard and made a patch. It was 100 ft x 22 ft. I tried growing 5 plants in my un-amended heavy clay soil. I didn't do very well. They all got attacked by squash bugs. Most of them died and the ones that didn't, wilted in the hot summer sun. Many of my newly set pumpkins aborted in the heat. Still by the middle of August I had managed a pumpkin that estimated at around 200 lbs. But it soon quit growing and started to go soft. I didn't have anything to take to a weigh off. Kenny Blair had a nice one at 752 lbs. just short of Bruce Orchard's state record of 777.5 lbs. In the fall of 2003 I brought in a couple BIG loads of horse manure to amend my soil. I got my coworker to till it in for me with his tractor. In the spring of 2004 I also bought shade cloth that covered the entire patch. I even set up a misting system. I bought stuff for squash bugs and Powdery Mildew. I bought 20-20-20, fish fertilizer and even some mycorrhiza fungi. I used some at each planting site. I scrounged up boards that I could put in the patch to walk on to avoid soil compaction. I put into practice all the things that I had learned. It all added up to more money than I had anticipated, but it paid off. I had four plants that did really well, except for some spider mites damage during the summer. In September I called Thanksgiving Point to ask them about the weigh-off. The guy said they weren't having one that year and if he had anything to do with it there wouldn't ever be one there again. With the help of Kenny and the folks at J&L Nursery in Bountiful we were able to put together a weigh off there. I had four nice pumpkins. They came in at 671, 835, 891 and 906 lbs. 906 lbs. was the new state record. That was a lot of fun because Kenny had called all the local newspapers and TV stations, so they were there at the weigh off. In early 2005 we got all the area growers that we knew of together (I think there were 8 or 9 of us) and started the UGPG so we could do what other clubs around the country had done. That was to set up a good weigh off and grow the club. We met at Crown Burger in Salt Lake. I ended up as the president only because Ray nominated me before I could nominate him. The next year, 2005, I did a little better at our weigh off at Gardner Village with one that was 932.5 lbs., another new state record. In 2006 I did a little better again with 963.5 lbs. but Kenny got the new state record with a huge 1104 lb-er. 2007 was a bit of an off year for me. I had a two, one 623 lb. and one 719 lb. In 2008 the only things I did differently from the past few years was I add coffee grounds, used more mycorrhiza, and sprayed weekly during the summer with seaweed & fish fertilizers combined.

**UTAH GIANT PUMPKIN GROWERS** *The Pumpkin Vine*

Maybe 2008 will be known as the year of the damaged pumpkins here in Utah. The two biggest pumpkins in the state this year along with several others split or went soft. Gordon Tanner had his biggest pumpkin split in the 2<sup>nd</sup> week of September but he kept it on the vine and it continued to grow. It weighed in at 1170.5 pounds. Andrew Israelsen had a huge pumpkin that split just a week before the weigh off. It was 1086.5 pounds. Ross Bowman, who had several early contenders, had all his pumpkins go soft or split before the weigh off. But he was still managed to bring a damaged pumpkin to Rockin' E which weighed 917.5 pounds. Kenny Blair brought a 680 pound split pumpkin to the weigh off also. See pictures inside on page 1.

**THE UGPG BOARD**

Feel free to contact any of us with any questions, comments or concerns.

<u>Name</u>	<u>phone</u>	<u>email address</u>
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Ray Tolman, Vice President	801-295-7019	jetrbt@msn.com
Kevin Card, Vice President	801-756-5711	highlandpumpkins@yahoo.com

*This is competitive pumpkin-growing,  
and its practitioners call it alternately a  
sport and an addiction.*

**UTAH GIANT PUMPKIN GROWERS**  
**1393 S 750 E**  
**KAYSVILLE, UT 84037**