

VOL. 2 ISSUE 2 · MAY 2024

UGPG ECHO

Official Newsletter of the Utah Giant
Pumpkin Growers



Gordon Tanner, Andrew and Yvonne Israelson added to the UGPG Hall of Fame!

This photo from 2005 shows the official formation of the UGPG. Gordon Tanner was appointed as the first president of the club, with Andrew Israelsen as vice president.



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Gordon Tanner

First President of the UGPG
Two-time state record holder, Giant Pumpkin
Current state record holder, Giant Squash
Three-time UGPG weigh-off winner



Andrew and Yvonne Israelsen

Andrew

First VP of the UGPG
Two-time UGPG weigh-off winner
2nd Place - Five times, 3rd Place - Two times, 4th Place - One time
Twelve overall 5th place or better!
2nd Grower in Utah over 1600 pounds

Yvonne

Many years of service, with record keeping, the website, and keeping everything running on weigh-off day!

Congratulations to our 2024 Hall of Fame Inductees!



New club prizes for state records, Master Gardener program

There is now a cash award for new state records in approved categories. The following is the list for 2024:

Utah

Giant Pumpkin: \$500

Giant Squash: \$300

Long Gourd: \$200

Other official GPC category: \$100

Various items on website: \$50

Idaho

Giant Pumpkin: \$500

Giant Squash: \$300

Long Gourd: \$200

Wyoming

Giant Pumpkin: \$500

There is also a cash award for the club member who scores the highest in the master gardener competition as defined by the GPC. \$150

Mark your calendars:
Patch tour - Aug 17
Logan - September 28
SLC - October 5
Regatta - Oct 12
Drop - Oct 26



The State Battle!

BY CLIFF WARREN

Here is an example of the "State Battle" scoring using data from last year. For anyone familiar with a cross-country running event, the scoring is similar to that. But there is a slight twist... any grower can only place once on the final tally. So, let's go through it.

Jay Richard had the highest overall weight last year. He scores one point for the Idaho/Wyoming team. (Note that lowest overall score wins in this case.) Clint was second, Joey third, and DB fourth. *(There is an error in the previous statement, Joey was actually second at 1486. The data was prepared quickly for an example and some errors were made. Sorry! -Ed.)* Now we come to the 5th heaviest pumpkin of the supported weigh-offs, and Jay appears again. He cannot score again, but he does push all the other pumpkins down a notch, making his number 1 effort slightly more valuable. Ron scores a 6, and so on, until 5 growers from each team are represented. Remember, this is a TEAM event, and 5 members of your team (in this case, state) have to score.

So Utah would have won the State Battle last year, 32 to 36. Then I thought, why not do the same placement rules, but calculate it on weights instead of places. I truly didn't consider this until I had entered all the data into a spreadsheet. In that case, using weight the Idaho/Wyoming team wins!

Which scoring method do you prefer? Vote in the comments. We are also seeking some sort of traveling trophy, something unique to our region, like the football teams that compete for the wagon wheel, lol. If you have an idea on that, let us know.

Place	Grower	State	Weighoff	Weight		
1	Jay Richard	Wyoming	Logan	1784		
2	Clint Nash	Utah	SLC	1478		
3	Joey Hogan	Utah	Logan	1468		
4	David Bradley	Utah	SLC	1426		
5	Jay Richard	Wyoming	Worland	1399		
6	Ron Hoffman	Wyoming	Logan	1395		
7	Ron Hoffman	Wyoming	Worland	1362		
8	Logan Searle	Idaho	Logan	1236		
9	Alan Gebert	Utah	Logan	1204		
10	DJ Steffler	Idaho	Logan	1192		
11	Brandon Crain	Idaho	Logan	1097		
12	Brandon Crain	Idaho	SLC	943		
13	Chad Kurtenbach	Wyoming	Worland	892		
14	Brent Evans	Utah	SLC	856		

	2	3	4	9	14	SCORE
Utah score:						32
ID/WY score:	1	6	8	10	11	36

Utah wins based on the lower overall score

	1478	1468	1426	1204	856	SCORE
Utah score:						6432
ID/WY score:	1784	1395	1236	1192	1097	6704

Now, higher score wins, and ID/WY takes the win.



Catching up with... Brandon Crain

BY CLIFF WARREN

Brandon is a fairly new grower from Shelly Idaho. New in number of years, but already rocking the top-ten leaderboard at our weigh-offs! Your newsletter crew recently had a chat with him to find out what he's up to in 2024:

How long have you been growing? I started growing a garden when I was 13. I started growing giants 3 years ago, and my first competition was 2 years ago.

Where is your patch? I grow in my backyard in Shelley Idaho. I live on $\frac{3}{4}$ of an acre and use about 6000 square feet to grow on. I grow right on the canal bank so that easement doesn't go to waste.

How did you get interested in giant pumpkin growing? I loved growing pumpkins and so I tried to grow a giant 3 years ago. It was only about 250 lbs so I set out to do better. I have loved it ever since.

What is your approach for patch preparation? Trying to be more prepared. I want to get lots done in the fall, but usually run out of time. So I do most of my preparation in the spring. I try to amend my soil from my soil test result. Focus on the biologicals that help my roots. I hope to have a patch that has 2 feet of compost to plant in. That is a work in progress. I use small greenhouses at the moment, but would love to get a high tunnel in the future.
(cont.)





Catching up with Brandon Crain, continued:

What seeds are you interested in this year? I have my own seeds from my pumpkins last year that I am excited about. I have a couple that look great from the club seeds. I bought a few seeds from a 1000 lbs pumpkin that won a Howard Dill award last year. I hope to get some pretty ones this year.

What are you trying for the first time? I am going to try and grow a giant green squash this year. We will see how it goes. I am also looking at putting my giants in tents to see if I can help control the large temperature swings we have up here.

What other things do you grow? I also grow a regular garden. I am going to try and grow a couple other giants. I think I will try tomatoes, sunflowers, and a green squash. We will see how that goes.

What tips do you have for other growers? There is a lot of helpful information and people out there, but you have to take that information and make it work for your area. Idaho has a much different climate than Utah or Wyoming. Take all the knowledge you can get and adjust it to work for your patch.





Teach the Kids

BY HOLLY SHUCK

Raise your hand if you're 40 or older.

Now, raise your hand if every grower you know is 40 or older.

Finally, raise your hand if you've personally involved a younger person in the giant growing experience.

My guess is the vast majority of you were in the affirmative for the first two questions with far fewer for the last. No worries, this is likely typical for the average grower. Heck, I am also over 40 (we won't mention by how much) and last year was my first year growing. The reasons we (growers) are generally "older" are likely due to having a bit more time to prioritize toward this rather demanding hobby. For example, we might be retired or partially retired. There's also a good chance that we don't have young children around and their activity-laden demands to fill our time. While I fit into the "older" mold, I am the exception to the "because I have more time" generalization. I don't, I just stumbled across giant growing at a 4-H conference. I was literally there to learn about new ways to engage youth in hands-on-learning. I grew last year for one reason...ok, two reasons... to "learn by doing" alongside the 4-H youth of Bannock County, ID and because it looked like a ridiculously fun challenge. I had never grown anything other than children and animals before last year. I was so pumped about it when I got back from the conference, I got permission to start a giant pumpkin contest at our local fair. Why do I choose to work with children? Initially, it was just happenstance. I moved to a new state and got a temporary job with the local extension office. Since then, I have whole-heartedly immersed myself in the current affairs of our youth, and to tell you the truth, it's a sad, scary reality out there.

According to a recent study done by the (CDC, 2018), the average daily screen time hours per age group in the US are:

- 6 hours for 8-10 year-olds
- 9 hours for 11-14 year-olds
- 7.5 hours for 15-18 year-olds

The screentime statistics stated above are OUTSIDE of what they are seeing in a school setting, which I can tell you from experience as I am also a substitute teacher, MOST of their day at school is also on screen. Whether it be via school computer or smart T.V. utilized by the teacher, there is a screen doing most of the teaching in every classroom all day long.

How is this affecting our children today? A 2017 National Institute of Health study suggests:

“The advancement of technology in recent years has led to increase screen-based technology usage among young people, coinciding with a decrease in their engagement with nature and impacting their mental health and overall well-being.”
(Domingues-Montanari S)

It seems a reasonable consequence that with the increase of screen time, comes a decrease of engagement with nature and to further reason that there would be a negative impact on both the mental health and overall wellbeing of today's youth is surely sensible. On the flip side here are a couple stats on the impact that “nature” has on today's children.

“...Playing in the dirt and even ingesting a little along the way, some researchers say, helps children build stronger immune systems. The Hygiene Hypothesis, first put forth in the 1980s, holds that when children are too clean and their exposure to parasites, bacteria, and viruses is limited early in life, they face a greater chance of having allergies, asthma, (Yazdanbakhsh, 2002) and other autoimmune diseases such as multiple sclerosis and type-one diabetes during adulthood (Platts-Mills, 2005) “According to a four-year study that examined approximately two million children under the age of 18, antidepressant use is on the rise in kids, with the fastest growing segment found to be preschool children aged 0-5 years (Delate, 2004). While not a substitute for medication, an increasing number of experts are recognizing the role of nature in enhancing kids' mental health. It's easy to see the effect when you watch children play outside. Kids are different when they're outdoors; free of school pressures and harried schedules, they relax and simply become kids. In fact, according to one study, children's stress levels fall within minutes of seeing green spaces, making outside play a simple, no-cost, and time-efficient antidote for an overstressed child.” (Kuo, 2004)

I would say we (grows) already knew the benefits of spending time in nature, playing in the dirt, and gardening. But what can we do as a community to help stop the gross downhill-slide our children are experiencing today?

Get your local youth involved in your giant growing project.

I know, we don't all have the ability to teach or the patience of a saint (which is sometimes what it takes to work with children) but who doesn't have a neighbor, a grandchild, or a niece or nephew who needs a little less screen time and a whole lot more nature? And who best to cajole these kids out into the garden than a giant grower? After all, isn't it "we" who know a little more than most about what it takes to work the ground, tend the plants and roll with the setbacks nature sends our way? You don't have to start a local giant competition, nor start a community garden. Start small and invite a young neighbor (with his parent's permission of course) over to see what you are growing. Show her the ropes, maybe offer lunch while discussing the importance of growing food for our health, trees for the environment, or a giant for fun! Maybe, you will be the conduit through which a new world record will be won.

If the saying is true "Our youth are our future." I say it is imperative that we involve them in one of the purest pastimes ever, after all, the life lessons are numerous.

*...discipline, perseverance, communication, adaptability, consistency, reliability...
etc*



MORE OF WHAT
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UTAH STATE FAIR 2024



2024 UTAH STATE FAIR GIANT PUMPKIN CONTEST

Get ready to squash the competition at the **NEW** Giant Pumpkin Contest! at the Utah State Fair! Whether you're a seasoned gardener or a first-time planter, everyone is welcome to join in on the fun. Cultivate your pumpkin dreams and watch them grow into colossal creations!

Prizes await the champions! From bragging rights to cash rewards, there's plenty at stake. Mark your calendars and start growing! The Giant Pumpkin Contest awaits – let the growing games begin!

- Registration & dropoff Wed. Sept. 4 1pm-7pm
- Weigh-off Sunday, Sept. 8 at 4pm
- Entry fee \$40
- Each entry gets two (2) free admission tickets to the 2024 Utah State Fair!
- Pumpkins will remain on display through the entire Fair (Sept 5 - 15).



For more information visit utahstatefair.com/pumpkin
or contact sakura@utahstatefair.com

