



# The Pumpkin Vine

## February 2016

### 2015--a HUGE Year!

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The 2015 season climaxed with not one, but TWO amazing weigh offs. At Thanksgiving Point, the tension was high as 24 pumpkin entries arrived, along with watermelons, tomatoes, long gourds, and field pumpkins. There was a lot of uncertainty as rumors and speculation had been running wild as they often do as weigh off season approaches. With two weigh offs in play this year, the strategy of which weigh off to attend was definitely a new wrinkle for Utah growers. The growers who brought the largest 3 pumpkins in terms of size were: Ken Kolb, from Roy, Brent Evans, from West Valley, and Alan Gebert, from Millville. The excitement was high as the last three pumpkins were weighed. This would be a personal best and first ever weigh off win for any of the top three contestants.



The crowd went wild as Brent Evans was crowned the champion and hoisted on the shoulders of friends and family with the trophy in hand.

Brent crushed his previous personal best by 637.5 lbs and ended up with the largest pumpkin in Utah in 2015. This entry also landed him the number 2 spot (all time) on the "Top Growers List" in the state, edging out Tyler Quigley by a mere 1/2 pound. Congratulations to Brent on an amazing season.

Two weeks after the Thanksgiving Point weigh off, a second weigh off was held at Hee Haw Farms in Pleasant Grove. This later weigh off gave growers the option to leaving fruit on the vine for an additional two weeks which can be key to achieving a personal best. The weigh off was well

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attended with 9 entries, and two over 1000 lbs. Chad Black and Juana Laub both had pumpkins weighing 372" OTT and the crowd knew it would be a tight race. After the pumpkins had all hit the scale, Chad brought home his first ever weigh off win, and personal best 1098 lbs. His entry was grown from the 2323 Meier seed. Over the last couple of years, Chad has been working hard and perfecting his growing techniques. It looks like his hard work is paying off. Congratulations Chad!



Not only was Juana Laub's 1073.5 lb monster good enough for second place, it gave her a new personal best and earned her a membership into the coveted half ton club.



She is the first ever female in Utah to grow one over 1000 lbs. It was an exciting weigh off and the UGPG extends its sincere thanks to Kyle and Chalise Smith from Hee Haws for sponsoring this amazing event.

## More Hee Haw Weigh-Off Shenanigans



# Q and A with Brent Evans

**B**rent—first of all, congratulations on an amazing year. What an accomplishment—a first place finish in the state.

**How long have you been growing Giant Pumpkins?**

Let's see...about 10 years.

**Did you ever think you'd win?**

No. NEVER. Never, ever. I thought I might have a chance to place in the top 5.

**At what point did you realize you had a real chance at winning?**

At the weigh off, but I thought Alan's was bigger. It's amazing Alan could get something that big from that area there, and I figured he had it won. It was a total shock. I was so surprised it took off like it did, and when it went heavy at the weigh off I was really shocked.

**Prior to 2015, what was your personal best?**  
817.5 lbs.

**Wow, that's quite an increase. What do you think the biggest factor was for this?**

I'm a firm believer in Utelite. It's unreal what it does to the soil. I brought in 12 cubic yards in 1600 sqft of garden area. It will make the West Valley clay soil loamy, so it will take a lot of water. I spent hours upon hours adding it to my garden. I also put 3-5 cubic yards of compost in that I get from the dump.

**What date do you start your seeds?**

I start my seeds the first part of April. I believe I started this seed 1386.5 on the 7th or 8th of April.

**Do you double plant?**

Yes, I planted two seeds side by side and just watch and see which one is doing better.

**What made you choose the 1386 Sadiq seed?**

I just looked at the seeds in the packet and said 'well...I'll try this one'.

**What vine pattern do you use?**

Kinda like a Christmas Tree, but I end up curling the main vine around the patch. I don't grow any secondaries after the pumpkin. I never terminated the main vine. All the secondaries did eventually get terminated by the time they were 20-30 feet long. I just let them grow 'til they fill the whole area

**How large was the plant that grew the 1455?**

900 sqft. It filled the whole space. Another thing I did different is usually I have two plants in the space. Travis told me before the season that I needed to do just one. In years past, it seemed like I would either lose both pumpkins or have two pumpkins that would make it, so I just said 'what the heck', and went with one. Travis talked me into that.

**What date did you pollinate the 1455?**

June 24th.

**How far out was it?**

It was out about 11-12 feet. It was the second one that I pollinated. I plucked the first one I pollinated when it was about the size of a basketball.



**What was your pumpkin estimating during the growth cycle?**

Day 30 - 518 #s

Day 40 - 736 #s

Day 50 - 930 #s

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Final measurement was 400 inches. Taped at 1337# and ended up 13% heavy.

enough that it lets the pumpkin slide across it while it's growing.

**What is your feeding program like?**

Well...I used some stuff called Fish plus, and lots of rain water. I would mix 5 gallons of fertilizer mixture every night and it was mixed with rainwater. Whether or not the rainwater has anything to do with it or not, I have no idea. We went from watering 4 times a day to 8 times a day for 2 minutes at a time, overhead. Every time it watered, it fertilized.

**Besides fish...what else did you feed?**

Mycorrhizae at the root nodes, Bio Boost, seaweed. I got these and the fish from DJ Steffler in Idaho. I used a product made by Fertlome 9-59-6, and Miracle Grow for tomatoes, and regular Miracle Grow I get from IFA. Up until the last 3 weeks, the main was still growing.

**Did you use shade cloth?**

Yes. 40%--50% shade. The whole plant gets covered.

**You going to grow next year?**

Of course! I intend to grow, I'm going to try to grow my own seed, and see what happens. One thing Travis talked about, is that seeds that come from guys' pumpkins locally, probably do better than seeds that come from elsewhere.

**What are some of the things that you feel like have helped you?**

Another thing that Travis and I do, in order to keep it flat under the pumpkin, we use a piece of an old trampoline mat. It will let water go through there and keeps the mice from eating up into the bottom of the pumpkin. Plus, it's slick



**Any other advice?**

Just grow for the fun of it. I spend some time out there, but not hours and hours like some guys do. I'm not a real serious grower. I just thought I'd see how big I could get one. I just grow for the fun of it. Travis kept saying 'I'm going to catch ya..I'm going to catch ya...' But then he'd come over and see it in the backyard and he'd say 'that thing's a beast'. We get into everything together. We build hot rods together. We do Christmas lights together. We have similar interests.

*Thanks for your time and for sharing some tips with us. Best of luck in 2016!*



# She could be "The ONE"

By Gordon Tanner, 3 Time State Champion

Over the years I have told lots of growers the way to pick the one pumpkin to keep is to pollinate 2-3-4 females on the main vine, measure all of them, and keep the faster grower. The truth is that most of the time I did not follow my own advice. I rarely measured all the females on all of the plants.

The truth be told, I usually had one female in mind for each plant. If she made it bigger than a beach ball- then she was the keeper. I would pollinate other as backups – just in case.

So how did I know what female was the one?

The criteria that I use is: A. Must be on the main vine. B. In a pollination window date. C. Distance out from the stump.

Typically, a plant would only give me one (sometimes two, rarely three) females that fit those criteria.

So logically the next questions are – What is your window? And how far out to you go? The answers to these are "it depends". And the answer is always evolving. I know some people hate it when I say that- but I am trying to get them to think and figure it out for themselves instead of just giving them the answer. If you learn and understand all this stuff, then you will be able to come to your own best conclusion.

There are various factors that influence the answer. First is when is the weigh-off? Ten years ago I would have told you June 28th through July 5th for the window and at least 10 feet out on the main vine. (Nobody worried about being too far out- it just didn't happen.) Back then pumpkins typically only grew for 85-90 days. And the weigh off was always the 2nd Saturday in October. But the last week in September was usually cold and

you wouldn't get hardly any growth. But now not all of those factors are the same as they were then. Our weigh off for several years has been the last Saturday in September. But this year we have one on September 26 and one on October 10th. And now days a pumpkin can grow for 100 days or more. Other variables are, do you have early season protection? How good is it? And how good is your soil? (it always comes back to that, right? YES it does! So improve your soil and you'll do better)

Personally I shoot for 12-20 feet out on the main for my pollination distance. Distance out is a way to measure how good your soil is. If you planted in early April but your main vine is only 12-15 feet long in Mid-June the either it was a really cool spring and or your soil isn't the best.

Different growers will have different views on what is ideal- but most of them are in the same general range, which is 10-20 feet out on the main vine.

With giant pumpkin growing- everything is tied to everything else. If you don't have good early season protection- then it doesn't matter when you start your plant, chances are it won't have anything ready to pollinate in mid-June.

If you have crappy soil it doesn't matter if you have a great heated hoop house- your plants are still going to do poorly.

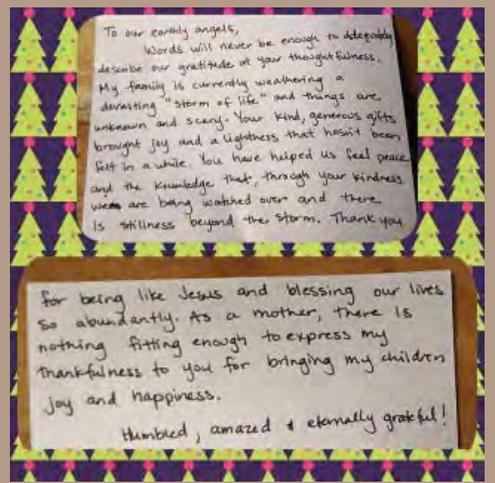
If you have great soil and great early season protection but you don't take care of a squash bug invasion then it won't matter, your season will be sunk.

The goal is basically to get as big a plant as possible as early as possible (within reason) so

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## Orange Christmas

A charity group was created by the UGPG pumpkin growers and a portion of the proceeds from the 2015 Drop went to a family in need during the Christmas season. What a wonderful experience as we went shopping together buying them a nice Christmas dinner. We delivered the goodies to their home along with some cash for the mother to buy gifts for her children. Thank you all who helped make this possible. **Best feeling in 2015!**



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that it can feed the pumpkin well during its whole growth period.

So pick a weigh off date and work backwards. 100 days back from September 26th is June 18th. Note, I wouldn't add extra days for poor weather because usually the weather is fine between those dates. But I would add extra days just to ensure that you get something pollinated. If you go back 7 days, you end up with June 11th. So I would set the window for pollinating for that weigh off from June 11th – June 18th.

105 days back from October 10th is June 25th. Note, I would add five extra days because I would guess that there are normally around 7 days of poor growth in that time frame at the end of September or the beginning of October. If you add 7 more days like we did above, you get a window from June 19th – June 25th. But let's say maybe you have a fully enclosed patch with a heater so you don't think that you need add 7 days for poor weather. Then your window becomes June 25 – July 2. So it does come down to "it depends" on how you are set up and how you are growing.

So how do you compare to the State's best grower? Matt McConkie tells me that his 1731 pumpkin was 20' out and pollinated June 23rd and that his 1817 pumpkin was 21 feet out and pollinated on June 28th. Also, that he had his target window in mid-June

between 11 - 15 feet out.

A different great grower might tell you that he shoots for the last week in June between 14 – 20 feet out. Why would they be different? Because they have different weather, they are in different locations, and they have different early season protection, etc. There is no one perfect way to grow giant pumpkins.

Other information:

How can I tell the difference between a male and a female flower?

A female flower has a little pumpkin underneath it. And it has a short stem. This is what grows into your pumpkin.

A male flower does NOT have a little pumpkin underneath it but has a long stem. It won't grow into a pumpkin no matter how hard you want it too. This flower is where the pollen comes from.

if the female does not get any pollen it will still grow for a few days but will abort (turn dull and die).

When will the flowers open?

The day before a flower will open (both male and female), the tip will start to pucker slightly and also the tip will be orange.

Other things to avoid (if you can):

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Short stems, the longer the stem the better. This helps avoid stem splits and stem stress. Bad stem angles. The stem is close to being parallel with the main vine, not perpendicular to it.

You can fix this by slowly moving your pumpkin just a little bit every day, starting when it is the size of a basketball. If you wait too long, it will be hard to move.

Seeds in females – see picture. The pumpkin did not completely form right- so there is a chance that it will not grow correctly and have internal defects that will cause it to split. Most growers cull females with seeds- unless it is their last resort.

Other things you can do:

Pick male flowers the day before; put them in a cup of water to use the next morning. Or cover them with a cup or zip lock baggy and store them in the refrigerator for 2-3 days before using them.

How do I beat the heat?

Use shade and ice around the female. Get a Styrofoam cooler and cut out two small notches for the vine. Put ice next to the female but not touching (like a 1 liter bottle), then place the cooler over the female right after pollination. Shade the cooler with a something – like a chair. Leave for at least 3 days- replenish the ice as required. Ken Kolb has a nice set up- ask him about it.

With all of that said, sometimes you just have to work with what the plant gives you. In 2004, I had one plant that I didn't get anything set until the 24th of July. All of the others aborted in the heat. The pumpkin was still growing well when I picked it for the weigh off in October. It weighed 835 lbs.

In summary, shoot for a Mid-June pollination for the first weigh off and if you don't get one, then you can shoot for a Late-June pollination which will be great for the second weigh off. And ideally you want to be at 10-20 feet out on the main.

## Pumpkin Growers -- A Bit Obsessed?



Lynn Glassford - Suited up and ready to stamp out pumpkin disease!



Juana Laub prepping her soil.



Craig Wilson - loaded and ready for the weigh-off

## SPRING SEMINAR

We are thrilled to announce that our Spring Seminar will be held on **February 20th** at Thanksgiving Point, Museum of Ancient Life - Amber Room (2nd floor), 2929 Thanksgiving Way, Lehi, Utah.

Don't miss this unique opportunity to be instructed by some of the brightest minds in the sport!



### SCHEDULE

- 8:30 - 9:00am** Purchase products and Meet and Greet
- 9:00 - 9:30am** Seed Starting with Ed Dennis
- 9:30 - 10:00am** The 1455 in review with Brent and Travis Evans
- 10:00 - 10:45am** Ralph and Juana Laub
- 10:45 - 11:00am** Break
- 11:00 - 11:45am** Soil and Advance Technique with Mohamed Sadiq
- 11:45 - 12:30pm** Q and A Panel with Carrie Fox, Tyler Quigley, Mohamed Sadiq, and Jim Seamons
- 12:30 - 1:00pm** Purchase products, merchandise, mingle

### Check out these videos:

#### TGP weigh off

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=c85AEXQWTAo>

#### drop

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1Kov5UMf-Mg>

#### slash bash

[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=P2vzRPNA\\_tc](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=P2vzRPNA_tc)

## PUT ON YOUR CALENDAR

**Patch Tour August 13th**

**Thanksgiving Point Weigh-off Sept. 24th**

**Hee Haw Farms Weigh-off October 8th**

**Pumpkin Regatta October 22nd**

**Hee Haw Farms Pumpkin Drop Oct. 29th**



Sadiq visited the famous Alaskan grower, Dale Marshall (is that Dale's huge pumpkin behind him?)



State Fair Blue Ribbon Winners  
**Bryan and Robin Bennett**



Checking out Ed Dennis' pride and joy at the Annual Patch Tour

## The Annual Pumpkin Regatta



# The Annual Pumpkin Drop at Hee Haw Farms

