



The Pumpkin Vine

Spring 2018

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

2017 Highlights

2017 was definitely one to remember! Even though it was a hot, dry summer, growers found ways to come out on top with spectacular results! With two Utah weigh offs, a wild and crazy regatta, and the premier pumpkin drop in the world, Fall in the Beehive State is not to be missed! Some of the notable achievements include:

- **Matt McConkie** 1974 lb Utah State Record pumpkin (16th worldwide)
- **DJ Steffler**-1400 lb Idaho State Record weighed at Hee Haw Farms
- **Ralph Laub** from Vernal wins the Harvest Bash weigh off in Nebraska
- **Juana Laub** sets new Utah female pumpkin record at 1314 lbs
- **Gordon Tanner** first half ton green squash at 1068.5 lbs
- **James Pruett** joins the half ton club in just his second year growing
- **Joel Cooke** of West Point wins UGPG Rookie of the Year by ½ lb with a 523 lb entry

IN THIS ISSUE

P1 2017 Highlights

P2 More Winners

P3 2018 Calendar

P4 Techniques Behind the 1974

P6 How I Grew the 1068.5

P8 Big Pumpkins in Unexpected Places

P9 Upcoming Seminar



More Winners



DJ Steffler and his family



Ralph & Juana Laub



Joel Cooke

HEE HAW FARMS PUMPKIN DROP HI-JINKS



GINORMOUS PUMPKIN REGATTA AT DAYBREAK



2018 UGPG Calendar

Save the date!

Spring Seminar: at Mountain Valley Seed Co.

March 10 9:30am - 1:00pm

Summer Patch Tour: Salt Lake, Utah, and Wasatch Counties

August 11th 9:00am - 3:00pm

Thanksgiving Point Weigh Off

September 29th 10:00am - 4:00pm

Hee Haw Farms Weigh Off

October 13th 10:00am - 2:00pm

Ginormous Pumpkin Regatta at Daybreak

October 20th

Hee Haw Farms Pumpkin Drop

October 27th

MANY THANKS TO OUR UGPG SPONSORS:



The Techniques Behind the 1974

by Matt McConkie

I believe the 4 keys to successful giant pumpkin growing are:

1. Selecting and planting a seed from a competition giant pumpkin
2. Proper soil preparation
3. Temperature management
4. In season feeding

For 2017, my goal was to do these 4 fundamental things better than I had done in previous years.

1 Seed Selection

For newer growers, I would suggest obtaining seeds from one of the pumpkins from last year's UGPG weigh off entries. Seeds from these pumpkins are given out to members at the spring seminar. You can also buy top quality seeds at the annual UGPG auction. I believe virtually all of these seeds have 1000 lbs+ potential. Hardware store or nursery store seeds do not have this type of potential. There are some seeds out there that have proven repeatedly to be capable of growing 2000 lb+ pumpkins.

2 Soil Preparation

Native Utah soils are not naturally ready to produce 1000 lb+ pumpkins. Large additions of organic matter and fertilizers are strongly recommended. For the 2017 season, my amendments included (per 1000 sqft):

- 8 yards per plant *Wild Valley Farms* Compost
- 1 cubic yard peat moss
- 20 lbs *Wild Valley Farms* wool pellets
- 5 lbs Mykos
- 5 lbs Rootshield
- 12 lbs potash

- 25 lbs kelp meal
- 10 lbs worm castings
- 8 oz Azos
- 150 lbs gypsum
- 20 lbs epsom salt
- 10 lbs calcium nitrate
- 10 oz liquid copper
- 6 oz Soluble Boron (get soil test before doing this one)
- 5 lbs Manganese Sulfate

I added the bulk amendments (compost and peat moss) to the whole patch just prior to transplanting the seedling. The chemical amendments I added in sections, beginning immediately prior to transplant in the planting area only (10' circle). Adding amendments to the entire patch days or weeks prior to transplanting will likely result



in wasting money on amendments since it will have washed away before the plant roots reach that area. As the plant grows, and spreads out during the months of April, May, and June, I would add the remaining soil amendments to the section of the patch that the plant would likely cover during the next week or two. This way,

the nutrients are still contained in the soil when the roots arrive in that area. If you add everything in April (or heaven forbid March) I believe all those beautiful fertilizers will be long gone before the plant reaches that area.

3 Temperature management

A huge part of growing a giant pumpkin in Utah is temperature management. In the Spring, the cold, frost-filled nights must be mitigated with heat lamps, space heaters, and/or soil heating cables. I love thermostats and I try to keep the plants at 80 degrees during the day and 68 degrees at night. I also think it is advantageous to shade the plant beginning in May and keeping the shade cloth over the plant until the end of August or so when the sun doesn't hit so hard. On days that are above 85 degrees, I begin misting the plants lightly with overhead sprinklers that are spread very far out so not much water falls on the plant. I set my timer for 30 seconds on, 5 minutes off. This mist will land on the leaf surface but is not coming down so heavy that it saturates the soil. If you don't want to mist your plants, I would suggest at least watering overhead during the heat of the day to help cool your plant (don't water in the early morning or evening hours).

4 In Season Feeding

If you talk to 10 different growers, you'll get 10 different answers on what they feed their plants during the season. Some growers favor organics, some favor chemicals, some do both and some growers don't feed anything. Personally, I've used both organics and chemicals and believe they can both be quite successful although I currently use a chemical program. I feed almost daily small amounts of chemical fertilizers which include primarily CalMag and Urea Mate soluble fertilizers which are injected into my drip tape irrigation system. With frequent

and heavy feeding, it is important to watch your plant for signs of over fertilization or conduct frequent soil or tissue tests. It is difficult to provide enough Calcium and Potassium to these giants during the peak growth stages, therefore steady applications are recommended.



1974 Fast Facts

- Seed Started- 4/1/17
- Soil Heating Cables at each planting site buried 12"-18" down
- Christmas Tree vine pattern
- Pollinated on 5/30/17 11 ft out (self pollinated)
- 16 sidevines before pumpkin
- 1000 sqft plant
- Drip Tape irrigation 20 min per day
- Intermittent misting for 30 seconds every 5 minutes when temps exceed 85 degrees
- 30% shade cloth over entire plant
- In-season feeding 6-7x per week through drip irrigation
- Treated weekly for insects, mites, and fungal disease
- 115 days old at harvest

I would love to see some new additions to the half ton club this year! I am happy to answer any questions you may have at any time. The best way to reach me is via email at isellutah@gmail.com

Grow BIG in 2018!

How I Grew the 1068.5

by Gordon Tanner

stanner@yahoo.com

The size of the plant was probably just over 600 sq ft. My designated area for the 1844.5 Holub squash was 22 ft x 25 ft (550 sq ft) but the plant ended up being larger than that, as I let it grow a little into other parts of my garden. I had another 550 sq ft spot behind this one for the 1985 Miller seed that I had.

I amended the whole patch with some 20-20-20 granular, Gypsum (calcium sulfate dihydrate, $\text{CaSO}_4 \cdot 2\text{H}_2\text{O}$), Azomite and Epsom salts (Magnesium sulfate, MgSO_4).

I started the two 1844 Holub seeds in mid-April (probably the 15th, I don't remember the exact date). Once it germinated I moved it to a 1 gallon ice-cream bucket with potting soil amended with Mychos, Azos, and seaweed powder. I placed it under a one bulb grow light that I have. I would water it twice a day, once in the morning and once in the evening. I added just a little seaweed powder and water soluble high in P fertilizer (Like a Miracle-Gro 15-30-15) to the water.

In late April I dug out an area that was 9 ft x 9 ft where I placed heating cables. I placed clear plastic on the soil over the heating cables and put up my hoop house. The hoop house is about 6 ft wide and 20 ft long, and contained both the 1844 Holub and the 1985 Miller plants.

I amended the planting area, about 6 ft x 6 ft, with a couple of large bag of potting soil, two bags of sand, Mychos, Azos and 20-20-20 powder. I made a mound for the

plant and transplanted it outside into the hoop house on May 3rd. Through all of May I continued watering/fertilizing (with some 15-20-15 and seaweed powder, as required, usually two times a day.



After the weather had warmed and the plants got bigger, I took down the hoop house.

The plants continued to do well through May and June. When I buried the vines I would add a pinch of Mychos, Azos & Seaweed powder mixture at each node. The 1985 Miller plant started to show signs of disease. The pumpkins

would set and grow to about 100 lbs then stop. I yanked the plant sometime in July because I did not want whatever it had to spread to the 1844 plant.

Females started showing up on the 1844 plant in June. I try to pollinate 3-4 females on the main vine at and past 8 ft until I have "the one". I pollinated (x self) a nice one about 11-12 ft out around June 20th. Since the weather was getting hot, I also put up the shade cloth over the whole patch. I have 66% shade cloth, which is probably higher than what is needed but I got a good deal on it. But it works really well when we have a summer with lots of days over 100°F. It stayed up until a week or two before the weigh off. Once this female was set and looked good, about basketball size, I cut off the one closer to the stump and the one just after it, but kept a 4th small one about 6-8 past it for another week or two, just in case. I adjusted the vines and

pumpkin to get the pumpkin in a good place with a good stem angle. At this time I also made a flat platform 5ft x 5ft made mostly of cedar fence slats, sand and a piece of paper mill fabric for the pumpkin to grow on. About this time I also started making compost tea to fertilize with. I bought a 30 gallon plastic trash can and an air pump aerator. I didn't get tea made regularly like I would like to have, every 4-5 days, but most of the time I got in one batch of tea a week. There were a few times when it was once every two weeks. To make a batch of tea I would put the can next to the patch (you don't want to drag a plastic can anywhere with 25 gallons of water in it), add about 15 gallons of water to it and turn on the air. Next I would add the following to a 1-2 gallon paint strainer and set hanging into the water in the can: 2-4 cups of worm castings and 2-4 cups of compost. Then I would add the following to the water: 1-2 cups of liquid fish fertilizer, 1 cup powdered 20-20-20, 1/4 cup of seaweed powder, 2 tablespoons of Mychos & Azos. Stir well, with something. Then I would add 5-10 gallons of water. I would let that run at least 24 hours then spray it onto the plants.



The squash grew toward the stump of the plant, which started to kink the main vine, so I had to move it 2 times to fix this. Once in late July and again in late August. I used a granular Imidacloprid systemic insecticide product



every month from planting for squash bug control. I also spray a few times each with Daconil and Banner Maxx fungicides.

The first time I measured the fruit was at the patch tour on Saturday Aug 12th, when the fruit would have been around 53 days old. She measured 344 OTT or 855 lbs on the old chart & spreadsheet that I use. She grew steadily (but certainly not spectacularly), about as expected following a normal growth curve, until late August when it quickly dropped down and to just a crawl. She did not gain any inches the last two week before the weigh off. So realistically she probably only grew for 81 days. She measured 375 inches OTT at the weigh off (1,183 lbs on the new GPC chart and 1,103 lbs on my old chart). It was a just little disappointing that she came in light, but overall I was very happy when I reached my goal of growing a 1,000 lb. squash in Utah.

Big Pumpkins in Unexpected Places

Featuring Alan Gebert

For those who attended the patch tour last summer, you were able to see the beauty found at the Gebert patch nestled in the scenic Cache Valley. Alan has a large 'main' pumpkin patch in the backyard where the soil is heavily amended and the plants have plenty of space for vigorous growth.



This year, they also planted a seed from the 1278 Gebert in the front/side yard. After the dog dug up the first seedling, Alan replanted a 2nd seedling and no one could have predicted what would happen next! The shocker of the season was that from this tiny 144 sq ft of tilled space under the pear tree came a giant weighing 803.5 lbs. To add to the amazing nature of this story, the pumpkin also won the Howard Dill award for being the best looking pumpkin at Thanksgiving Point.



Certainly those who know Alan can appreciate his accomplishments and knowledge as a grower. No one was surprised to see Alan arrive with such a wonderful pumpkin. The surprising thing about this pumpkin was the location that it grew as well as the small size of the patch that produced it.

Watering was done using a hose bib timer connected to garden hoses



which carried water to three sprinkler heads on wooden stakes that evenly distributed the water over the plant. Things don't have to be fancy and expensive to be effective. The plant did overgrow the 144' patch by a few feet on each side and vines spilled out onto the lawn a bit.

Alan expressed his amazement that the plant and vines were so small, but the pumpkin kept steady gains to reach it's large final size. Alan said 'I think the pumpkin could have been even much more orange if it would have seen more sun. I had to keep it covered under a double tarp because

the pear tree kept dropping pears on it.'

This pumpkin is truly a testament to what can be accomplished in a small space without the fancy equipment we often believe will give us an edge. This beauty



was grown with good seed, good soil, consistent care and hard work. Thanks for sharing your amazing this amazing story with us, Alan. Congrats on a successful year.

Group Purchase Orders Available

We will have a variety of growing products available at the seminar for purchase including mycorrhizal fungi, azos, and more. Come early to get yours before it sells out!

Want to grow a Giant pumpkin?

FREE SEMINAR!

Sat. March 10, 10am-1pm
10am Beginners class
11am Advanced class
11:30 Q&A with Joel Holland
@ Mountain Valley Seed Co
175 W 2700 S #150,
SLC, UT 84115

Free Seeds!

Big Pumpkins make everyone smile!

Kids LOVE to watch them grow!

Grandkids will want to see how big it is!

Pretty simple to get a 300lb pumpkin



Featuring...
2017 Half Moon Bay Champion,
Joel Holland
who holds the US record for
largest pumpkin EVER grown in
America at 2,363 pounds!

Learn from the state's
BEST, including...
Jamie Johnson
"The Pumpkin Man"

* Beginner through
advanced instruction.
Something for everyone!

www.utahpumpkingrowers.com
Find us on Instagram and Facebook!

