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JULY 2017

FEATURES

Fieldays

Products used by the NZ record holder

A Q&A with the current world record holder

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July 2017 Newsletter

Hello Giant Pumpkin Growers

How's everything going? Good I hope. Well it's pretty much the middle of the year, the weather is a bit crappy and if your serious about growing a giant pumpkin then you should already be thinking about the 2018 season.

If your super serious you have probably already been thinking about it the second you cut your last pumpkin off the vine to go get weighed at one of the many pumpkin events around the country.

This whole issue is about what you can be doing right

now, and things you should be thinking about plus other bits and pieces to tide you over until you can get a seedling into the ground.

The more time and effort and let's be honest money you put in, the better your results will be.

Defining your goal early on will help shape the way you go about your growing season. Have a think about how you would answer these questions:

- Are you growing just for fun?
- Are you growing for a competition?

- Who will you be competing against
- How much time can you commit?
- Are you going for a new NZ record or world record?

Having a clear goal can help reduce stress and keep you focused and heading in the right direction throughout the growing season.

And with that thanks for subscribing and here is the July 2017 issue of The Pumpkin Post.



Sam

Seed Importing Cut Off Date

If you are getting seeds from overseas you are going to need to get them to Eddy by the **1st of August**



The Process

Buy your seeds or get them from growers

Get them sent to Eddy's US or Canadian postal address

Fill out the form on the website

The cost of shipping to NZ and the certificate is all covered by Eddy who is amazing.

For his postal address and the form to fill out, go to this page on the website.

www.giantpumpkins.co.nz/importing



When I win lotto



The ultimate helper

Fieldays

Every year the largest agricultural event in the southern hemisphere happens at Mystery Creek in Hamilton.

I head along each year to look at really expensive things I can dream about owning one day, and more importantly I head along to see if there is anything of interest for giant pumpkin growers.

If you have never been before then I highly recommend it, as it's unlike any other event around.

One of the highlight's was just trying to leave Fieldays as the rain had turned the paddocks into a muddy mess, and while I almost did make it out, my poor little car got stuck near the exit, and I got towed out by a quad bike.



This year there were 2 new companies I learnt about.



And



I cover below the products they were offering and how they can be of use to you.

Crafty Gatherer

Crafty Gatherer is run by Marco and Tess from Tauranga and is an artisanal craft company that create products for home and garden.

Marco was at Fieldays showing his Crafty Forkster off, think of a broadfork crossed with a pitch fork.

After talking with Marco I was happy to learn that they do also make a broadfork.

These can make light work of large areas, helping break up and aerate soil.



Broadfork

These are a great option for people that don't have access to machinery, are environmentally friendly, unbolts for easy transport and both the Craft Forkster and Broad-

fork come with different options to make sure you get the right tool for the job.

Make sure to check out the Crafty Gatherer website to learn what Marco and Tess are up to, and check out all their great products.

www.craftygatherer.co.nz



Crafty Forkster

Broadfork in Action

Dave's Garden Products

I met Dave at Fieldays from Dave's garden products and learnt that Dave is all about Humates and is a big believer in the benefits they offer to both soil and whatever you are growing.

There is a lot of information over on Dave's website regarding Humates and the benefits to be had.

His products are great for the beginner grower looking to get bigger pumpkins. The compost and fertiliser products come in different pack sizes, and all the products come with free shipping.

Dave's Ultra Concentrated Compost - A great source of organic material, it also contain slow release humate, humic and fluvic acids.

Dave's Organic Liquid Compost - Helps stimulate and increase the soil biology.

Dave's Liquid Fertiliser Helps boost plant vigour, containing fish and seaweed, it provides plant available nutrients.

Dave's Growth Booster Pellets Add valuable carbon to your soil with pelletised 80/20 mix of sheep manure and humate.

This is just a brief overview of the products, make sure to check out the website, and if you have any questions make sure to say hi to Dave.

www.davesgardenproducts.co.nz



BigPumpkins.com

Regular readers will probably know the drill, but for all the new people out there, have you checked out www.bigpumpkins.com??

It's the largest giant pumpkin website around, with lots of great things to check out, all for free.

Growers Diary's - A whole bunch of growers from around the world have a growers diary. They update it as their season goes along, and is a great way to see what people are doing and how they are doing.

Message Boards - An old school message board that has been around for a long time. Lots and lots of information, always new things to read every day. Make sure to use the search function if you are looking specific information.

Chat Room - Want to chat with other pumpkin growers from around the world in real time, make sure to check out the chat rooms. Also make yourself familiar with them for the seed auctions.

Plus More - There are all sorts of bits and pieces on the site, so make sure to have a look around, being in existence since 1999 it's easy to see why it is the go to place for growers from around the world and all sorts of abilities.



New Growers Section



This section of the newsletter is for all those new growers out there, who are super keen to grow bigger but might not have all the basic knowledge to build upon.

Like I mentioned in the start of this newsletter, you will need to define what your goal is, this can help with decisions later on down the track and might help with discussions with

significant others if you end up spending money on trying to grow the biggest vegetable you can.

There are of course many benefits to growing giant pumpkins:

- ⇒ Great family activity
- ⇒ Can lead to wanting to grow other things
- ⇒ Healthy competition amongst friends and

family

⇒ Being part of a pretty unique and awesome community.

The thing to remember is there is no super secret formula, it comes down to putting time in, giving your plants what they need and not getting put off if you have a bad season. It can happen to anyone.

“Where is a piece of dirt that you can utilize for half of the year without any problems.”

Patch Selection

For new growers patch selection basically comes down to this:

Where is a piece of dirt that you can utilize for half of the year without any problems.

Problems you may encounter could be other people’s plans for that space

(remember you goal?) good communication can help with this early on.

If you’re growing in a paddock, who else has access? Will there be animals in there at some point?

Do you have access to water? Does it get sunlight? Good drainage? Is it windy?

There is a lot to think about and if your goal is to grow the biggest you can, you should have this area already sorted.

Bigger patches are great, but require more work,.

[Patch Selection on the website](#)

Soil Testing

Soil is super important for growing things, understanding how it works, and making it the best condition will give you the edge over other people no matter what you are growing.

There is a flip side to this though, getting soil tests

done costs money, and then there is the cost to amending the soil with products, all well and good if you are going for a new record, but if you just want to beat your neighbor this might stretch the budget.

While you can achieve

good results by doing the basics well, to get great results you will need to spend some money.

No matter where you sit on soil testing currently, make sure you do a PH test, [it’s simple, you can do it yourself.](#)



Cover Crops

Cover crops can be beneficial in a number of ways.

- It can be a great green manure that can be dug back into the soil
- Great as a nitrogen fixing plant, storing nitrogen from the air into nodules on the roots
- A natural way to provide weed protection
- Can help stop the effects of soil erosion caused by wind,

rain and the sun.

- Water retention can be improved in soils with hard soil pans
- Can control soil borne fungi and nematode problems within the soil

If you have your patch location sorted, do some research into a cover crop and see if it will be beneficial to you, there are many cover crops to choose from.

Check out my [post on cover crops](#) for more information.



Green manure cover crop

“The weather always being unpredictable providing early season protection should be in your mind.”

Early Season Protection

Transplanting your seedling out into the patch in the second half of October isn't uncommon, but with the weather always being unpredictable providing early season protection should be on your mind.

Most growers will build their own shelter for this early protection, consisting of wood and

a covering material it's best to start sourcing items now so your not in a mad rush at the start of the season.

On page 3 I mentioned [big-pumpkins.com](#), make sure to check on the growers diaries and have a look at what growers from around the world are using for early protection, even

in completely snow covered patches.



Walking Boards

Do you have walking boards organized for your pumpkin patch for the upcoming season? Did you know walking boards were used?

As the name implies, walking boards are used to walk on and are placed around the patch to allow access around the plant

for vine burying and weeding while spreading your weight out across the board stops the ground getting compacted.

With lots and lots of roots spreading out, the last thing you want is to break these, your plant needs to get as much nutrients and water it

can.

Some growers even make special patch shoes to move around.



RyanH from Ontario's Patch shoes, and boards in the patch.

YouTube Videos



I think it is fair to say that everyone that is reading this has at some point seen a YouTube video at some point in their life.

If you haven't then I'm not sure what type of cave your living in.

Either directly from the YouTube website or from a video embedded on another site, online video can provide you with a different way to consume information, something that is ideal for people that learn better by visual mediums rather than a wall of text.

With over 300 hours of video being uploaded every minute it's easy to see the impact YouTube has on the world around us and highlights just how much content out there you will potentially never see.

I've rounded up some giant pumpkin videos/channels you should check out.

Work With Nature - [How to Grow Giant Pumpkins](#)
Work with Nature has a great selection of videos about everything you could imagine, from beekeeping to blacksmithing, and a good starter video on pumpkins.

Giant Pumpkin Wars - [How to Grow Giant Pumpkins with Ian and Stuart](#)

Ian and Stuart Paton from the UK made 18 short videos last season taking people through what they did for their season, they are well known within the pumpkin community and Ian is the current president of The Great Pumpkin Commonwealth

Mark Clementz - [Worldwide Giant Growers](#)

Mark is a polarizing person within the pumpkin growing community, you either love him or hate him. Himself or his alter ego Bubba Presley appear in these videos, with small nuggets of information throughout.

He also produces more in depth videos for members of his website, which gives you access to his private Facebook page.

Website Update

If you haven't been to the Giant Pumpkins NZ for a while you might not have known it's had a bit of an update.

The plan was to have as much information cleanly laid out as possible, and make the website behave better for anyone viewing it on a mobile device.

The old site wasn't playing

well with some upcoming things I have planned for on the site.

I've also started changing/adding info to the How To section of the website, making sure there is as much information as possible for all you growers out there. I fit all this in with work and life and other projects that crop up, all for free and all for you

the giant pumpkin grower of NZ.

Please let me know if there is anything you want to see updated before anything else, or anything that you feel is missing.



Products Used by a Record Grower

Tim Harris is the current NZ record holder having twice broken the NZ record, in 2015 and 2016 when he set the current NZ record at 789.5kgs

While 2017 didn't bring another record for Tim, he did still manage to

grow 2 pumpkin weighing in at 676.5kg's and 674.5kg's and with pumpkins that big he must know something about growing giants.

Seed selection and getting the soil into optimum conditions before planting is a big part, using the right

products during the season to balance out nutrients and battle diseases/deficiency the plant may be facing is also important.

Here is what Tim used during his 2017 season. I've linked to suppliers where I can.

Product Name	Application
Agrifert Marine NPKS	Used once a week before pollination (foliar)
Agrifert Nutra Boost	2 - 3 Time a week in watering system
Agrifert OptiGrow	Once a week (foliar)
Epsom Salts	Was added to water once a week (2-6tsp) and as a foliar when needed (2tsp in 8 litres of water)
Yara Calcium Nitrate	A lot was added in December as Tim had a N deficiency (1kg) then most waterings had (2 - 4tsp)
Yara Kristalon Orange	Every watering after pollination (2-3tsp)
Horticulture K40	Once a week after pollination as a foliar (100mls in 8 litres of water)
Yara Bortrac 150	Once a fortnight as a foliar and drench
RD2 Mycormax - Mycorrhizae	At leaf nodes
RD2 Superzyme	Once a fortnight (1-2tsp)
Lithovit	Maybe 6 times over the season
Neem	As needed
Talendo	Twice in January then once a month

There were also a couple of products from Yates when or if needed for pest control.

These figures are for a 2000sq foot patch, which had 2.5 plants growing in it, the half being Tim's sons plant.

World Record Holder Q&A

World record holder Mathias Willemijns from Belgium who grew the current world record 2624.6lb pumpkin did a question and answer session on the European Giant Vegetable Growers Association (EGVGA) [Face-book page](#).

Here are some of the questions and answers from that.

Q. How deep is your loose soil in your patch?

A. 30 cm very loose soil... 30 - 60 cm is not compacted at all but I can't say it's a very loose soil below 30 cm

Q. What products you put into the holes of the main root. Do you use any special rooting to cover the secondary, or only mycos? What level of ph has soil? Do you used big stem or anthesis!!! Its all my friend

A. I check my EC level only at the end of the season (was 0,65 mS/cm² at the end of season 2016). I don't like any tensiometer to check my soil moisture because those tools only check the water level at 1 specific point and at 1 specific depth in your greenhouse... I prefer to take soil samples manually by an auger. So I check my soil moisture by my own eyes. No seaweed, no fish fertilizer. I used some green compost, agrolution 313 (water soluble fertilizer) and agrolution 316 (water

soluble fertilizer). No special products in the hole of the main root... I cover the secondary's with compost and mycos. Soil pH is 6. I didn't use any big stem or anthesis in 2016. I will use big stem in 2017

Q. What measurements do your plants have and how far are pollinating? To bury secondary, that you use mycos, some rooting ... some special product? Something special in



the main root well?

A. 8m width and 10m long. I bury secondary's with compost and mycos. No other products.

Q. How far

away was your pumpkin from the stem?

A. Pollinated all between 4 and 4.5m far out on the main vine

Q. Did You use a lot of Epsom-Salt? You had very green leaf's. How much per Week?]

A. Yes, I added always some epsom-salts every time I sprayed my leaf's with a fungicide or an insecticide. So let's say... every 10 days 5g/ plant epsom salts

Q. You say that you water less early season, how much water per plant are you using during the early fruit growth?

A. Depends on weather, soil, plant development... If I really have to say a number... approximately 50l each plant each day.

Q. Did you use vegetable compost for soil preparation?

A. Compost from green manures (so yes... also some vegetables are composted in it,

especially tomato plants)

Q. Was there one thing you did this year that you thought made the difference? Or was it a collection of things?

A. I didn't change a lot compared to season 2015. I just made sure I didn't have any disease or pest. I monitored my plants every day as good as possible and I tried to counteract immediately to diseases, pests or nutrient deficits. I also tried to keep my natural predators as much as possible alive when I had to spray with insecticides.

World Record Holder Q&A cont....

Q. Which products do you use on your plants? to fertilize and push them? for insect and fungicide control?

A. I don't like leaf fertilizers... only some epsom salts. Insecticides (tracer, xentari, vertimec, pirimor) and fungicides (ortiva top, signum)

Q. Side vines, how long!

A. 4m

Q. Which advise would you give to a grower who wants to grow a 2000+ pumpkin

A. Spend a lot of time monitoring your plants. Keep them healthy... it's really important! Plants will feel stress when they are affected by diseases or pests... stress = less growth

Q. And what do you think is necessary to grow a 3000 pound pumpkin?

A. Making good genetical crosses. We need plants/ pumpkins where we can push hard on

Q. Leaf compost or composted manure?

A. I used composted green manure last season

Q. Do you send tissue samples in periodically? What did your results, if any typically indicate for your plants? Did you apply foliar fertilizers or treatments? Did your temperature fluctuate much in your tunnel? Did the plants ever experience heat stress?

A. No tissue samples. I 'read' my plants. No foliar fertilizers (except epsom salts). Yes I do still have too many temperature fluctuations... My greenhouse is not automated at all. Yes plants also had some heat stress... That's something I could work on to reach heavier pumpkins?

Q. What is the best fertiliser for pumpkins

A. There is no best fertilizer... I used agrolution 313 & 316 last season... probably I won't use it again in 2017. I will need other water soluble fertilizers due to a big change in my nutrient balances in the soil

Q. Hi Mathias, Do you use a fertilizer injector system such as Dosatron and foliage sprays for your fertilizer and insecticide needs? Also do you use all organic or a mix of chemical and organic?

A. I add water soluble fertilizers in an ICB container. The

container is connected to 80 dripping tapes that can all be closed / opened separately. Almost completely chemical

Q. What methods do you use to keep your soil loose up to 60cm?

A. I use this:



Broadfork



Q. Do you water over head or trench

A. Watering is by drip tapes on the soil... but I do have a misting system above my leaves. I use the misting system only in early stage to raise the air humidity. Smaller plants can't raise the air humidity high enough in a poly tunnel in early season. If the air humidity drops too low... the plant will go in stress and will grow slower.

Q. Do you use any rooting suppliers like hormones or bacillus trichoderma azospirillum? Anything like that stuff?

A. endo mycorrhizae, trichoderma harzanium and coniothyrium minitans

Q. Do you use some compost or other when you bury the vines?]

A. Yes, green compost to bury the vines

Q. How about any co2 or co2 products in your patch?

A. I didn't start adding any CO2 yet because you need a good monitoring tool to check the CO2 level. Also... when you start adding CO2... you will need more light, heat, ... You will need more than just a bottle with CO2 and it's not that cheap

World Record Holder Q&A cont....

Q. Do you do any pre-season fertilizing on your patch?**A.** depends every year on my nutrient balance in the soil... For 2017 no pre-season fertilizing

Q. What the best piece of advice you could give to a new grower?

A. Read diaries of pumpkin growers on Big-Pumpkins.com



Q. Do you think temperature of water has impact on plant and fruit? if so what temperature do you try to keep your water at?

A. Yes... Cold water isn't good at all for the roots of the plant. I prefer 12 - 18 °C

Q. Do you put in anything to loosen up the soil like perlite sand or gypsum?

A. No

Q. Do you use compost tea? If so what's your recipe?

A. I don't use any compost tea

So there we go, a lot of great information from that Q&A session.

I think there is a lot to be said for keeping things simple and getting the basics right. While lots of growers want big gains in weight and are always looking for the next great product or tool to get them there.

Taking the time to understand how the plant uptakes nutrients, how soil type and structure play a role are all very important elements to having successful weight gains for personal bests or record breaking pumpkins.

There is a lot of information out there and very knowledgeable growers all willing to share information, the key is to do the networking and make the connections.

In this upcoming growing season I still won't have a proper patch to grow in, but I will be reading, taking notes and connecting with other growers to see how their season is going.

As always I will be sharing stuff on [the blog](#), so make sure to check it out or follow GPNZ on [Facebook](#) for updates.

I'm also starting to work on another project, one that will help pumpkin growers from around the world connect in a different way.

It's still early stages, but I'm hoping it will be a source of knowledge for people in the future.



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The aim of Giant Pumpkins NZ is to help new and seasoned growers by providing information they will find useful.

From information about growing, products, events or just interesting people all of this is provided via the website and the Facebook page. Helping the giant pumpkin growing community grow here in New Zealand.

Thanks for subscribing to the newsletter.

Next Issue Due Out - October 2017

Let me know if there is something you would like to see in the next newsletter. Remember to check out the Facebook page and website for all the latest updates.

Advertise

Want to advertise your product or service in the next newsletter?

Contact me via the details above to discuss options.

Write an article

Do you have something you want to share with the other giant pumpkin growers here in NZ and abroad? Get in touch.

