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Volume 4, Issue II

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October 2018 Newsletter

Another year and another giant pumpkin growing season is almost upon us, it's an exciting time and it might be hard to explain to non giant pumpkin growers, but I am sure they have their own hobby/project/passion they get excited about.

A big hello to all the new people that have signed up for the newsletter, welcome.

So what have I been doing in my off season? Well I've been updating bits and pieces on the website, writing articles for this newsletter and contemplating everything I've been doing.

The world is so small now, it's very easy to connect with all sorts of people from all over the world, and what I've been finding is that

people have been finding the GPNZ website which means I must be doing something right. From a guy in the UK wanting to send me some samples of fertiliser to a request to send information about pumpkin measurement to a prisoner in the US, to seed requests locally it all just reinforces everything I've been working on.

I've been learning more about creating videos lately too, learning how to make them more entertaining that people will want to watch (Tip: make them as short as possible)

With all of this I'm looking forward to this season, not only to try and push what I'm doing in what I am now calling the Tiny Patch, but to also try new things out, and to tell

my own story.

What's your story?

I think documenting your growing season either in written form, via pictures or videos or a combination of all of these is a great way to learn, share and interact with other growers and people in general.

Now it's time to sit down and relax and read the latest edition of The Pumpkin Post.



Sam

Holiday Planning

What makes us unique down here in the Southern Hemisphere and something that impacts the popularity of growing giant pumpkins is that our season is backwards to the traditional growing season the Northern Hemisphere growers have.

We start in October which means no pumpkins for Halloween, this fact alone could explain why Halloween isn't really a thing here in NZ.



We then have the joy of growing through Christmas

and New Years. That's right overseas readers our Christmas and New Years is right in the middle of Summer, and it is a glorious time.



For many this period is full of Sun, Family, Food, BBQ's more food and a time where lots of people go on holiday. All this greatness can detract from giant pumpkin growing.

What can you do? Be dedicated to the cause and plan for this period. Not everyone has this time off, growing as a team could be one way to get through this period.

Getting friends, family or your neighbour to help babysit the pumpkin while you are away is another option.

People find this kind of thing very novel and will be keen to help out. And the positive thing is if the pumpkin dies or splits you can blame the other person (J/K)

Automate your watering. There are some very clever products out there that can help you apply water when you aren't at home. Which is better than nothing when the hot Sun is beating down over your pumpkin plant.

Don't let the Christmas and New Years period put you off growing giant pumpkins.

Mill Fabric

If you've been keeping an eye on growers from around the world, you will notice that a lot of people have some red or orange coloured material underneath their pumpkin, usually with a bed of sand on top.

This material is commonly called Mill Fabric and this year I have got my hands on some of it.

I have it in 1.5m squares, big enough for the biggest giant pumpkins out there.

If you are keen to get some flick me an email sam@giantpumpkins.co.nz and we can work out the logistics



Is Facebook Replacing BigPumpkins.com?

I love BigPumpkins.com it is the ultimate home for giant pumpkin growers from around the world. There is a lot of great stuff on the site and if you've read any of my newsletters before you'll know I mention it every edition.

But is BigPumpkins.com starting to lose out to Facebook? It's something I've been thinking about recently.

BigPumpkins.com which I'll refer to it as BP.com from now, has been around for a crazy long time in internet time. Something that is amazing and great but it sure is

showing it's age. It hasn't kept up with technology and I've found myself spending more time on Facebook lately.



In the last edition of The Pumpkin Post I listed a bunch of great Facebook pages you should have a look at. You can find that old edition in the archives right here. I've listed a couple of new ones in this edition too.

I'm seeing a lot of people post pumpkin related questions and get great answers in these Facebook groups. It helps you have a photo and the answer below it, also it's great to get notified of any follow up questions. (Tip: post a comment or write f and you'll be notified of follow up comments)

While both locations will no doubt exist together, will new growers prefer to use tools they are more familiar with? Let me know your thoughts.

Study Other Growers

I think one of the most overlooked things in giant pumpkin growing is looking at what other growers are doing. You don't have to agree with what everyone else is doing, but it is a great starting point especially for new growers to see what people of all levels are up to.

Head on over to the diary section on BigPumpkins.com and see what's been happening, this time of the year for the Northern Hemisphere growers is very exciting, weigh offs are happening and results are being published.

If a pumpkin catches your eye and you like the look

of it, there is a strong possibility you can scroll backwards through the diary entries and see exactly what it took to get to that pumpkin.

At the top of every diary page is a little mail icon, if you click on that you can email that grower directly and pick their brain. Most giant pumpkin growers in my opinion are great people willing to share knowledge.

Knowledge that might just give you the edge against people you are competing with.

How I get Notifications from BigPumpkins.com on my Phone

While I might not be checking the website as much as I used to, I'm going to share how I get notified of new posts on the website automatically to my cell phone.

happens then something else happens, in this case if there is a new post on BigPumpkins.com then send a message to my cellphone via Telegram.

NOTE:

The applet only shows the title of the post when it is added to the message board, it won't show you all the replies people make. But it is a good way to keep your finger on the pulse, especially if you are busy.

This will be a brief overview of how I have it set up and how it works for me.

IFTTT works with hundreds of services so you can get the message sent to all sorts of different places, including email if you don't want another app on your phone.

Here is what it looks like when I receive the messages on Telegram on my phone.

What You Need Hardware:

A cell phone or tablet

Apps:

Telegram - A private messaging app which works on multiple devices and is free to use.



Each message board and even each growers diary has a little orange button next to it which has RSS on it.

You get to pick which message board or grower you get notified about and you will need to set up a new applet for each one.

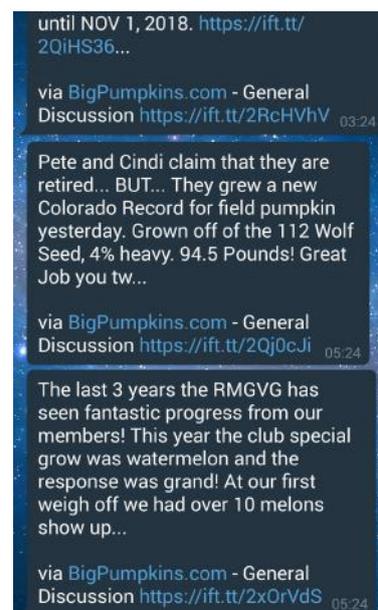
IFTTT - If This Than That is a free web based service that gets your apps and devices to work together.

Here is what the applet looks like for the general message board on BigPumpkins.com



Download and install telegram onto your device. Head on over to IFTTT.com and sign up for an account.

If this than that works by creating applets (think of them as a recipe or a set of instructions) if one thing



If this is something you'd like to do and it all seems a bit daunting and you'd like more of a step by step process, please let me know and I'll put it together for you.

Patch Boards

If you aren't growing in a small space like I am you are very lucky and I am envious of you.

Giant pumpkin plants compared to some other plants have a very shallow root structure.

Any disturbance on the soil around the plant could be damaging fine roots below the surface. Which could be damaging your plant and slowing down pumpkin and plant growth throughout the season.

But how do you help protect the roots?
By staying off them of

course, but you will need to get into the patch for many reasons, burying vines, pollinating pumpkins, weed removal, to name a few.

Patch boards are what you need.



For most people this will be a collection of boards to walk across and judging from the couple I have seen in person, most people are using either 150 or 200mm x 25 or 50mm (or 6-8 x 1-2 inch) board strategically

placed around the patch so they can get in there and bury vines, apply products all while not compacting the soil.

Have a look at what you can get for free, can you repurpose pallets for this or know someone that has boards they don't need.

A good website to look at is Freecycle.org where you can find people in your area offering items for free, or you can request items, it's a great site. I use it a lot to get rid of unwanted items.

More Facebook Pages

Here are a couple more Facebook pages and GVGO Facebook Page or groups to check out, with great content and lots of updates these pages are doing great things.

- Crazy Growers
- Pacific Giant Vegetable Growers
- New England Giant Pumpkin Growers Association
- NH Giant Pumpkin Growers Association



Giant Pumpkin Events

Running a pumpkin event, or want to run one? And not sure where to start, or want some new ideas, make sure to grab your free copy of How to Run a Giant Pumpkin Event.

Big thanks to all the new people that have grabbed a copy of this, I hope your event is a successful one.

It looks like there is going to be a lot more pumpkin events popping up all around the country in the very near future which is super exciting.

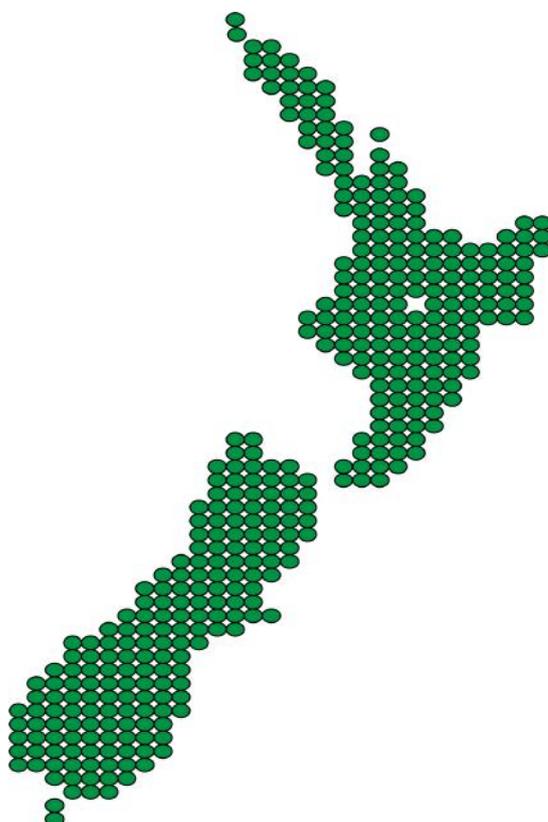
If you are around Hamilton on the 31st of March 2019 make sure to come to The Great Pumpkin

Carnival held at Hamilton Gardens.

We are the biggest pumpkin event in the country (I'm the current president) we've weighed the heaviest pumpkin the Southern Hemisphere 3 times now.

We have lots of different categories to enter, fun for the whole family and if you want to say hi, I'll be there all day.

For more info visit:
www.thegreatpumpkincarnival.co.nz



BigPumpkins.Com

If you want to take your giant pumpkin growing to the next level, you need to hang out where all the top growers in the world hangout, BigPumpkins.com

Since 1999 this has been the website where questions have been asked, diary entries have been made and giant pumpkin growing has been pushed to levels once thought unimaginable.



It's **FREE** to join, and once you have your login you can reply and ask questions on the forum, which is a great way to get advice from seasoned growers.

Posting into your own growers diary lets you post updates on your patch as the season goes, and is an ideal way of tracking your growing season each year.

Chat with other growers from around the world in the chat room and take part in the yearly seed auctions, getting great seeds at a good price while helping out other

growers and clubs at the same time, and now that you know how seeds get sent to New Zealand there is no reason not to get your hands on some great genetics.

There is always something to find on BigPumpkins.com and if you are wanting to boost your knowledge this is a great place to spend a few minutes or hours.

Issue the Challenge

Do you remember the excitement of growing your first giant pumpkin? Do you remember wondering how big this vegetable could get? If you do, and I am sure you do as I get that feeling every year, why not help other people feel that too?

Issue the Challenge

Find out who would be keen to have a friendly competition? Family, workmates, friends, they could be your biggest competition and there is nothing like growing against people you know.

Some people won't be keen

Sure there will be people that would have tried it before in the past, either without great success or only something they did with the

kids. Other people will be very quick to tell you they don't have enough room to grow a giant pumpkin, luckily you don't need much room.

But to be fair, don't waste your energy on people that like to say no a lot. Find people that want to give things a go, get them excited and have a great competition.

Come up with your own prizes, or put a bet on who has the largest or smallest pumpkin. There are lots of fun things you can do when the competition is amongst people you know.

If everybody did this, the small

community of giant pumpkin growers in NZ will slowly grow, eventually everyone will be growing 500+kg pumpkins.

And to me that isn't such a bad thing.



Weight Estimation

For all you new growers out there seeing a giant pumpkin grow through the season is an exciting time. But hanging out until a competition to get the weight of your pumpkin can be an excruciating wait.

There are many factors that go into growing a giant pumpkin, so your estimate will give you a ballpark figure. Remember the only figure that matters at the end of the day is the one shown on the scales.

Luckily you can get an estimate of your pumpkin. Some very clever people took data from pumpkins, did some mathematical equations and produced a weight estimation chart.

To find the latest charts and a guide on how to take the measurements head on over to the pumpkin estimation page on the website.

You take 3 measurements, add those numbers together and look at the chart. This will give you the estimate of your pumpkin.



Want More?

Past editions of The Pumpkin Post can be found on the website in the Downloads section or by clicking here. Last Octobers edition has lots more useful info for all you new growers out there.

The Blog

I cover what I've been up to through the season from my own patch to others, to events, and anything else pumpkin worthy you'll find it right here.

The Vlog

Don't feel like reading but watching video is more of your thing, check out the GPNZ YouTube channel, with vlog episodes throughout the season, as well as newly updated videos on various pumpkin topics.

The How-To Section

I'm continuing to update this when I can to make it an even better resource for you.

With such a small country, and a small group of dedicated growers it can sometimes be hard to create new content in only one form. Creating content in different forms helps me throughout the season. especially when I start getting busy.

If there is something you want to know, see or have a question you can't find an answer for, please get in touch and I can either create the information for you in one form or another or point you in the right direction.

Early Protection

Protection protection protection

Did I get your attention?

In the early stages of a pumpkin plants life the biggest problem it can face is the elements it is exposed to outside in the patch.

Sudden cold nights, and wind can destroy or severely stunt the growth of a young seedling and really change the outcome of your season.



Make sure to check the weather forecast to see if there are any cooler nights coming, be prepared. These cool nights can vary depending on where you are in the country.

Wind the invisible killer. Even if you have wind break up, or are growing in a sheltered area weather patterns can change and your normally calm pumpkin patch can turn into a mini wind tunnel.

Make a temporary shelter

This doesn't have to be super fancy, it just has to be practical and work.

There are many different types of covering you can use from greenhouse type material, to windbreak etc.



Keep in mind you don't want to cook your plants either, they can go from warm and comfortable to getting extremely stressed really quickly, if you aren't at home during the peak of the day, a breathable fabric might be a better covering for your structure.

Having the best growing environment at this crucial early stage of growth is very important.



Think about the conditions where you are growing, what you already have that can help, or what you may still need to sort out.

There is nothing worse then going out to check on a plant and see it snapped off at the stem due to wind.

Early Season Checklist

Giant Pumpkin Seeds - Have backups as well.

Watering Supplies - Do you need hoses, drip tape, connections?

sheets and or build a structure to hold a tarp over your pumpkin.

Growing location - If you have multiple choices, have you picked the best location?

A way to keep notes - Keeping notes and comparing seasons is important.

This is just a basic round up of things you should keep in mind, I'm sure other growers out there have a lot more things they'd like to add to the list.

Pots - You can never have too many of these, plastic or peat.

Snail Bait - Natural or not so natural products help stop slugs and snails eating young seedlings.

What else would you suggest to a new grower? Let me know via the website or Facebook and I'll add it to a Facebook post with a shoutout to you.

Seed Raising Mix - Don't use soil from outside, get some seed raising mix.

Soil Tests - A must for next level growers wanting the best results, at minimum do a PH soil test with a DIY kits.

Early Protection - What do you have for this?

Shade protection - Get some old

NZ Pumpkin History



It's great to see an old picture of our current deputy Prime Minister Winston Peters embracing a pumpkin.

I couldn't find any information about this image, if you know where this was taken and when please let me know.

Next Issue - January

Thanks for reading this edition of The Pumpkin Post, I hope you found something of value contained within it. Feel free to share this with anyone you think would like it and if there is something you would like to see in a future edition please let me know.

The next issue will be coming in early January. January is when the pumpkins start packing on all the weight.



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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.