FOLIAR FEEDING FOR TOP WEIGHTS

Healthy plants come from healthy soils. The primary consideration when growing giant fruits is to have fertile, well balanced soil. However, when pushing the boundaries of plant and fruit growth, having a foliar feeding program in place is one way to improve plant health and ultimately yield.

Foliar fertilization is a way to supplement plants’ nutritional needs by applying nutrients directly to the leaves. Leaves have aperture structures, mainly on the undersides, called stomata that open and close for the exchange of gasses during transpiration as water vapor and oxygen leave to cool the plant. The other purpose of the stomata are to allow carbon dioxide to enter the plant during photosynthesis. Under the right conditions, nutrients can also enter the the plant through these structures.

It has been proven that properly applying fertilizer to the leaves will benefit the plant. Foliar fertilization is a key practice I employ to maintain and quickly boost secondary nutrients and micro-nutrients.

Most growers amend their soil in the spring. Because of canopy growth, it is very difficult to further amend the soil mid-season. Many nutrients can be absorbed through the leaves faster than the roots can uptake them. Foliar feeding has the added benefit of delaying the natural plant decline, or senescence post fruiting. Additionally, targeted foliar fertilization can be timed to correspond to critical phases in the plant’s development. Finally, certain nutrient treatments can serve a dual purpose: fertilization AND disease suppression.

Foliar fertilization effectiveness is reduced if leaves are washed off via precipitation or irrigation within 24-48 hours. There are growers who immediately rinse off their leaves, but I question whether this is a best practice. Here is what literature suggests:

**How Long it Takes for Nutrients to Enter Plant Tissue**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Nutrient</th>
<th>Time for 50% Absorption</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Nitrogen (as urea)</td>
<td>1/2 - 2 hours</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Potassium</td>
<td>10 - 24 hours</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Magnesium</td>
<td>2 - 5 hours</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Zinc</td>
<td>1 - 2 days</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Iron</td>
<td>10 - 20 days</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Phosphorus</td>
<td>5 - 10 days</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Calcium</td>
<td>1 - 2 days</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sulfur</td>
<td>8 days</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Manganese</td>
<td>1 - 2 days</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Molybdenum</td>
<td>10 - 20 days</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

If you want healthier plants and bigger fruit, you may want to consider your foliar feeding program more closely. My weights have gone up dramatically since employing a regimen. I will continue to fine-tune my program in 2019 in my quest for several one-ton pumpkins!
Across the Commonwealth: Spring Seminar Updates

Southern New England Giant Pumpkin Growers - Steve Connolly

About 70 of the Southern New England Giant Pumpkin Growers gathered for our annual Spring Seminar on April 14 at The Cornerstone Pub in Exeter, RI. Our seminar starts with 1 hour outside followed by 2 hours inside. After a long winter we were treated to a perfect day. The attendees first loaded up trucks and vans with their annual needs of various ferts and fungicides purchased at bulk rates, then caught up and socialized with growers from throughout New England. Inside, some great presentations took place. Gene LaRiviere started things off with an awesome talk about his 1576, 1923 and 2031 Pumpkins, followed by Steve Connolly with a great presentation about the benefits of Proteins/Amino Acids, their effect of Microorganisms Nutrient update and overall soil heath.

Our GPC representative, Woody Lancaster was in attendance and gave a nice State of the State update about the GPC, their new website, new international GPC email newsletter edited by Cindy Toback, future Big Shows and more.

Big announcement in the club is that our new president is Ron Wallace and Michael Oliver is our new Vice President. Plus we got to give Joe Jutras a well deserved recognition and applause for his Trifecta Award, which he got at Green Bay for winning 3 World records in three different categories over the years (Giant Pumpkin, Giant Squash, and Long Gourds). How cool is that?!

Our members really seemed to be looking forward to the 2019 season. They got all their new seeds and many had planted them before our Spring Seminar. So there were lots of early starts with lots of heating cables and a bunch of growers have purchased BIG Greenhouses to help maximize growth and extend the season. The competition will be tough, but we like our chances. And thank you to our sponsors WOW, Neptune's Harvest, North American Kelp, Origin, Pacific Northwest Farmers Cooperative and Mighty Mustard for their continued support. Good luck everyone!!
Pacific Giant Vegetable Growers  - Cindy Tobeck

PGVG's spring seminar was April 7th in Cornelius, Oregon. There were about 30 growers in attendance who enjoyed a potluck lunch and raffle. The club was anticipating that many new growers would be in attendance and we wanted to make sure that they had good information, as well as seeds to get their seasons started right! Brett Cooper gave a presentation on Growing Giant Pumpkins 101, where he took growers through the basics of an entire season. Cindy Tobeck's talk was titled, Seed Starting and Pollination, and had many slides detailing how she selects seeds, then prepares them for germination. She also discussed making controlled crosses when pollinating. Scott Holub gave an informative talk on Soil Nutrients, where he discussed the needs of the plants as well as an explanation on how to use the analysis in a soil report to calculate amendments using the online soil amendment calculator. Finally, Jim Sherwood gave a presentation on how he grew his Oregon state record bushel gourd, motivating many in the room to plan that in their lineups.

Giant Vegetable Growers of Ontario  - Kirk Chenier

Held April 6th in Breslau, ON at the Polish Dom Hall, 9-3:30. 50+ attendees

Inducted into the GVGO Hall of Fame were John Vincent and Bob and Elaine Mackenzie. Growers of the Year was the team of Art Johnston and John Butler. 2018 awards were given out including Master Grower jackets that were presented to Norm Kyle, Elaine MacKenzie and Doug Court. Presentation from OMAFRA was given to members on composting. Club business was done and plenty of Pumpkin talk was had by all in attendance.

Continued next page...
2019 Southern Growers Winter Meeting -Susie Zuerner

Growers from four southern states met in Winston Salem, NC at the Benton Convention Center March 10th for a day-long seminar on growing the giants. About 53 growers were present to hear and participate in discussions about: The Fundamentals of Growing the Giants, Grafting Watermelons with the Hole Insertion Method, as well as product presentations from rep Jim Otte from Stoller Inc, scientist Kouruna Choury from Mammoth P (via skype), Tei Gordon from Be-Organics (via skype), Matt Crapps presented Bio-grow and Bio Humic.

Our new GPC rep Elijah Meck brought us up to date on GPC news and later gave a well thought out presentation on spraying safety and insect control in the south. After a terrific lunch at a local BBQ joint, we reconvened to talk about product sponsorships and took an in depth dive into how our plants work and grow with a plant physiology session lead by soon to be Ph.D. Travis Birdsell.

John Buettner from the NC State Fair shared information about the Weigh-off and how the growers and the fair can make the event better. The highlight of the day came in the form of a tremendous raffle for all things pumpkin and watermelon related! Robert and Annette Burchette gathered a huge pile of 45 lots ranging from a bucket organizer, select sought after seeds, blanket throws, fertilizer, shuffle hoe, bio char, Urea Mate, and too many other things to list. Growers also had the benefit of purchasing products such as 50 lb kelp bags, BE-1, bio-grow and humic at essentially wholesale prices.

The day flew by with not enough time to visit and have extensive panel discussions with the heavy hitters that were there. Thank you to all who drove long distances to attend and those who spent many hours preparing for this winter meeting. We hope to see you next year for an even better program!
GIANT FRUIT & VEGETABLE SEMINAR
LEARN THE SECRETS TO GROWING GIANTS!!
May 4, 2019 - 9:00 AM

TWO Ways To Join Us:

(1) In Person:
Komohana Extension Office
875 Komohana Street, Hilo
Room D-202 (upstairs)

(2) Online by Zoom:
https://zoom.us/j/254817405

For Questions or to RSVP
Call: (808) 969-8213 or Email
settlage@hawaii.edu

Glen & Margaret Martin
Wisconsin
3 time winner of the Master Gardener
Competition; World Record Long
Gourd in 2011: Personal Bests for
Squash - 1,196#, Tomato - 7.45#;
AG - 2017#, Watermelon - 184#;
and Field Pumpkin - 148#.

Jim Sherwood
Oregon
Has been growing giants for 18
years. Jim was a GPC Board
member for 10 years and started
the Pacific Giant Vegetable
Growers in 2001. Personal best
include: Bushel Gourd - 303.5# (7th
biggest of all time) and AG -
1868#.

Joseph & Kaarina Menting
Wisconsin
Joe and Kaarina have been
growing for over 10 years and
have been in the top five in the
world three times. They have won
multiple weigh offs along with the
Howard Dill Award. Their personal
best include a 7.73# tomato (8th
biggest of all time and Wisconsin
State Record), AG -1742#
and120.5# field pumpkin.

COME WITH ALL YOUR QUESTIONS!
MEET & SPEAK DIRECTLY TO EXPERIENCED GIANT GROWERS!

If you require an auxiliary aid or accommodation due to a disability, please contact Becky Settlage, 4-H Office, at 808-969-8213 or settlage@hawaii.edu by May 1, 2019.
Knowledge for Giant Pumpkin & Watermelon Growers

By John P. Taberna – Soil Scientist
For more information please visit www.westernlaboratories.com/publications-from-john

If the water extracted pH is less than 6.7, add 10 pounds of lime per 1000 sq. ft. If the pH is greater than 6.7 and the Ca is less than 2400 ppm, add 5 pounds gypsum. It takes up to 7 years for lime to completely dissolve. Don’t expect rapid increase in pH. Remember: You’re only treating the top 6 inches with lime. Gypsum will go into solution in the first year.

Fertilizer Recommendations:

Phosphorus (P)
The lab suggests 2 pounds of Phosphorus per 1000 sq. ft. 11-52-0 Ammonium Phosphate is a common Phosphorous fertilizer and it contains 3% sulfur. Take the 2-pound recommendation and divide by .52 (% P in 11-52) and you get 3.88 pounds 11-52. The problem is the recommendation is P and 11-52 is Phosphate. You now need to multiply the 3.85 by 2.3. You will get 8.86 pounds of 11-52 per 1000 to get the 2-pound P recommendations.

Nitrogen (N)
The lab recommended 3.5 pounds of Nitrogen per 1000 sq., but you should only to apply 1/2 pre-plant. So, 3.5/2=1.75 pound of N. There is 11% N in the 11-52 so take 8.86 pounds of 11-52 applied and multiply it by .11 (8.86x.11) you get 0.97 pounds of Nitrogen. You are going to apply 1.75 pounds Nitrogen pre-plant, so 1.75-0.97=0.78 pounds N. Your pH is above 7 so you are going to use ammonium sulfate (21-0-0-24). Ammonium Sulfate contains 21% N so 0.78/.21=3.7 pounds Ammonium Sulfate and with the Nitrogen in the 11-52, you have 1.75 pounds Nitrogen pre-plant.

Potassium (K)
The lab recommends 5 pounds Potassium per 1000 sq. ft. The best source for pre-plant K is 0-0-50 Potassium Sulfate. The K in 0-0-50 is K20, not K. So 50/1.2= K in 0-0-50 (42% K). You will need to apply 12 lbs. 0-0-50 to get 5 lbs. per 1,000 sq. ft.

* During midseason, if you notice marginal burning, add 2 pounds of 0-0-60 Potassium Chloride per 1000 sq. ft. and thoroughly water with overhead irrigation.
**Sulfur (S)**
All products suggested contain Sulfur. There is no need to add more.

**Magnesium (Mg)**
The lab recommends 0.7 pounds of Magnesium. Epsom Salt is the easiest to find and it contains 10% Mg. 0.7 pounds/0.1= 7 pounds Epsom Salt to apply per 1000 sq. ft. When burying the vines, always add 1/2 teaspoon of Epsom Salt. Be sure to thoroughly mix. When drenching, add 1/2 teaspoon Epsom Salt to the drench. During midseason, if you see mottling and blistering, foliar spray 1 teaspoon per plant twice a week. If you can find the product Kmag, this would satisfy the K, Mg and S needs. Add 1 teaspoon to foliar or drench per week per plant.

**Calcium (Ca)**
If you are having blossom end rot or collapsing of the pumpkin, it’s generally related to Calcium, Boron and Potassium. After pollination, when you’re burying the vines; add 1 heaping teaspoon Gypsum, 1 level teaspoon 0-0-50 and 1/2 teaspoon borax each time. Don’t forget to thoroughly mix with your mycorrhiza, peat moss and other secret amendments. Also, don’t forget Taberna’s Secret Formula to stimulate bacteria and beneficial fungal growth: 2 cans of beer, 2 multivitamins, 2 aspirins, then pee in the hole after waiting an hour. This is a man’s thing that naturally occurs in the backyard, so if you are a gal raising giants... put your significant other to work!

**Micronutrients**
When pre planting, it's best to use Metallic Sulfate materials. It’s been found that sulfated forms of micronutrients retard onset fungal diseases.

**Zinc (Zn)**
The lab recommends 2 oz. of Zinc per 1000 and you are using Zinc Sulfate which contains 36% of Zn. 2/.36=5.6 ounces Zn to apply per 1000.

**Manganese (Mn)**
The lab recommends 1.5 oz. of Manganese. Manganese Sulfate is 24% Mn. 1.5/.24=6.3 oz. per 1000.

**Copper (Cu)**
The lab recommends .7 Copper. Copper Sulfate contains 25% Cu. 0.7/.25=2.8 oz. Copper Sulfate per 1000.

**Boron (B)**
If Boron is recommended, it's best to foliar or drench with 1 tablespoon of Borax. When burying the vine, don't go over 1/2 tablespoon of Borax.
REPORT FROM TIM HARRIS (New Zealand):

I was really excited to get started this season as I felt I had my soil near perfect, which I must thank my mate Shane from Tasmania. Many many hours were spent on chat discussing this and all things growing. I started the 2145 McMullen, 1338 Martin and a few others as back ups on the 10th October. We had a very poor start due to very cool, wet, cloudy sbeginning of spring. But by mid November, the weather came right and it was almost perfect for the rest of the growing season. Both the 2145 and 1338 showed some potential. But I lost the 2145 with a BES at day 47 measuring 378 ott. Then just 2 weeks before the weigh off I lost the 1338 to a soft spot at the blossom at day 87. It was measuring 434 ott, or 1740 lbs. I put this one on the scales and it came in at 1891 lbs. So that goal of mine to get first 2k pumpkin down under will have to wait another year. -Tim

REPORT FROM SHANE NEWITT (Tasmania):

Our pre season saw a major overhaul on two of our top patches with our consistent CEC ranges being changed down from our normal high 48 CECs to a 24 CEC and an 18 CEC respectfully. It was an interesting learning curve for the new irrigation requirements on these new soil profiles. All plants raced out of the blocks from setting out of pots and into their new growing patches. The two greenhouses which are 16m x 10m and 12m x 10m managed to keep the soil and air temperature warm in our normal cool spring weather which sees us with snow on the mountains that are close by. This persisted up until the last week in November. This enabled us to set fruit on the 5/12/18 and the 9/12/18 and thus giving our pumpkins a total amount of 96 to 100 days of maturity. Grower error with main vine management caused a problem at day 32‘ish and resulted with a severely kinked main vine. On a positive note we were traveling really well until this occurred and we could clearly see that our result could have been much better than the 1220 pounds that was achieved at the final weigh off.

Overall, it was a very pleasing year of growing and to see 13,000 people attend the D.W.Kingston Memorial challenge weigh off was simply magic! The pumpkins have grown the Bream Creek Show in the past 5 years and the show is now 118 years old. My highlight of the growing year was to have a visit from a young Canadian lady by the name of Lindsay Wells who is the niece of none other than our Eddy Zaychkowski. I was fortunate enough while Lindsay was down here in Tasmania to do a video Skype and finally meet Eddy in person. Eddy and I work together in helping all Australian growers with seeds and new consignments of seeds will be arriving in the near future. I wish all you growers in the Northern Hemisphere the very best in this coming season. Grow ’em big! - Shane
Growing Giants in Paradise
by Becky Settlage, University of Hawaii – Manoa CTAHR
County Extension 4-H Agent

If you were to ask someone to name plants grown in Hawaii, the typical response would be that Hawaii is known for growing things like pineapples, bananas, papayas, or sugar cane…but did you know that the Big Island of Hawaii is now working on growing giants?

A few years ago, I received about 60 giant pumpkin seeds from a friend that ran a giant pumpkin contest in California. Also being the State Coordinator for the Hawaii Junior Master Gardener program, I thought having school children grow these giant pumpkins would be a unique and fun way to get them excited about agriculture, have them appreciate and have a love of the outdoors and would teach them to be self sustainable (which of course is important, living on an island). Little did these children know though, that besides having fun trying to grow a giant pumpkin, their teachers were also secretly getting them to learn science, and skills such as problem solving, learning about responsibility, teamwork, record keeping, and of course getting outside and being active. At the beginning, there were a few in the area that weren’t pleased with the idea of teaching children to grow giant pumpkins because after all, giant pumpkins aren’t typically grown Hawaii, but after a little bit I think I got them to understand that it wasn’t about the pumpkins…as I tell everyone…if you can teach a child how to grow a pumpkin, they can grow anything!

Being lead to the BigPumpkin.com website allowed me to meet several giant growers on the mainland and other countries, which soon lead to some seed donations…which came in pretty handy as many more schools the following year wanted to then try themselves to grow the biggest pumpkin.

Today, thanks to the continued donations of seeds, the interest has spread to growing not just pumpkins, but also an attempt to try and grow giant watermelons, giant tomatoes, giant bushel gourds, long gourds and giant sunflower heads. So everyone is on the same playing field, I start the plants to insure that everyone has strong, healthy plants when they start the contest.

Continued next page...
Now, understand, not all is paradise when it comes to growing in Hawaii (like most people would imagine)...like elsewhere, our island deals with many issues with various diseases, pests, wild pigs, some areas on the island experience a lot of rain, some little or no rain, some areas of our island have soil, others have to figure out how they will grow on lava fields, there are a variety of temperatures all around the island, and in some years we've even dealt with hurricanes and lava flows...you name it!

Also, when working around children, many schools and families tend to lean towards organic or natural remedies, which sometimes might not be as strong or effective as using chemical means. Contestants are made aware of all these things when plants are distributed and we have them plan ahead for how they will stay one step ahead, to prevent or overcome these challenges. Contestants are provided a limited amount of information to help them get started when they pick up their plants, but are also highly encouraged to do a little research on their own (check out “how-to” videos, reach out to growers on BigPumpkin.com or the GPC site, etc) as we say in 4-H, “Learn by Doing”. Although the plants that are distributed have great genetics and have the potential to grow MONSTER size fruits and vegetables, we want the children to keep this in mind, that it does take a lot of care and management along with some skill and know how to get to the full potential of these plants. We teach them to set realistic goals. If, in their first year, they can just keep their plant alive and are successful in getting a fruit or vegetable of any size, then that is GREAT!! - this gives them their personal best and then, the next time around, they can build from that success. Of course, not everyone is successful (for many reasons...poor management, extreme weather conditions, natural disasters)...but what I have found is the schools and families may be sad that their plants didn’t make it, but they have had so much fun that they want to try again the next year!

Last year I organized a Giant Fruit & Vegetable Contest Seminar so contestants could have a first hand opportunity to learn (via Zoom) the secrets of growing “giants” from expert growers like Susan Dean Barber of Ohio, Cecil Weston of Michigan and Glen & Margaret Martin of Wisconsin. Later in the summer I organized a Giant Fruit & Vegetable tour, where stops allowed participants a chance to check out the competition and as well, used it as a learning opportunity to see what things were working for those growers and then some of the challenges they might have been experiencing. Because everyone enjoyed these great educational opportunities, I am organizing them once again, starting with the online seminar, thanks to the help this year from Jim Sherwood of Oregon, Joe & Kaarina Menting of Wisconsin and returning to help in our second year, Glen & Margaret Martin of Wisconsin.

Continued next page...
Our contest in Hawaii is small but well received. We have a nice following of schools and families interested in trying to grow this year. There is much we still need to learn, but each year we continue to build from the previous year. I would personally like to say mahalo (thanks) to the GPC and all the giant growers, like Tim Mathison, Gary & Karin Cook, Joe Sabol, Joe & Kaarina Menting, Glen & Margaret Martin, Cecil Weston, Jim Sherwood, Susan Dean Barber, Mark McWilliams, Jeremy Lindley, Scott Marley, Cliff Warren, Ron Wallace, Stuart Paton, Roger Spencer, Michael Fleming, Jef Treece, Todd Kline, Rondi Johnson, Pete Vanderwiel, Matt Winey, Bruce McGreevy, and so many others for their past seed donations, advice and continued support for the children here in Hawaii.
Bart Toftness of Team Pumpkin once again organized the 150 square foot pumpkin challenge. Nobody in the world has been able to break the 1000 pound barrier while keeping the plant within the confines of 150 square feet. Per the contest requirements, growers need to post regular diary entries to document their season. Here are this year's contestants:

John Butler Canada
Playful Orangutan Canada
eddyz Canada
Pumpking Germany
cuerbitrix Germany
The Pumpkinguru USA
Dustin USA
Big T Hoff USA
Glenoma kins USA
Gene McMullen USA
Tiger Girl USA
Mister Leon USA
VT John USA
jcham21 USA
Ron W (old) USA
Joe J USA
Reed Thoma USA
Tom Knight USA
Adaml23 USA

The giant tomato growers were busy this winter with their annual winter indoor tomato growing contest. Here are the results: 1st: Bnot, 2.14 lbs (Winner of $50, good job); 2nd: Zowie, 1.88 lbs (first timer!!); 3rd: Evert626, 1.39 lbs; 4th: Ned, .49 lbs

Eddy Z. has organized and put up $3000 for a Tomato 10 Pound challenge! The 10 pound challenge is a spin off of the new world record done in the past. The reason behind this challenge is to better your hobby.

1) If and when you feel you have a contender, you will be required to notify myself or a GPC rep for your area at least 3 weeks prior to weighing your fruit.
2) You will need at least one rep of our choice to accompany you when the fruit is weighed and to document the event.
3) You will need to disclose the seed and your growing practices along with a full presentation at the upcoming GPC convention for the year you achieve this milestone.
4) You will also be required to relinquish at least 25% of the seeds to be used by all clubs and the GPC. This can and should be done immediately after the weighing of the fruit.
5) You must agree to a 1 year moratorium for directly selling seeds to the public or until the last club auction of that year.
6) The prize money will be offered to the first person to break the 10 pound barrier. If the grower does not adhere to the rules or opts out, then and only then will a second 10 pound fruit be considered.
7) There is and will only be one winner

Beginning with the 2019 growing season we will be offering a consolation prize of $500.00 to the largest, $200.00 for second and $100.00 for third grown for the year and does not break the 10 pound barrier. Again sharing of growing techniques and seeds will fall into the parameters to be awarded the prizes. We will be more lenient on rules for this prize and will work with the growers. If any grower opts out of this then the next in line will replace them.

We will also have 1 (one) hidden weight prize in each of the pound categories from 3 pounds on up to 8 pounds. This will be a gift certificate for products and will be fully disclosed before the end of May 2019. Just to be totally clear: 10 pound plus tomato prize is $3,000.00 payable at the GPC Conference. Subsidiary prizes will be handled on a per grower basis.

Eddy Zaychikowsky
eddyz@efirehose.net

Nic Welty and Truckin Punkin have organized an Old Seed Contest, where growers pick a seed from 2003 or older and pay $20 into a jackpot. The top 3 winners will win 70%, 20% and 10% of the money. It looks like there is a lot of interest, however it is proving difficult for many of these old seeds to successfully germinate. A lot of the contestants had the good idea of starting MANY seeds with the hope of getting at least one to sprout.
Here is the latest endeavor of Joe Ailts, aka Joze: I am thrilled to report that the first episode of the "Giant Pumpkin Podcast" has gone live. I've submitted to and am published on Spotify. You can listen here:

https://open.spotify.com/show/0Il0sXR2L0U397bYtoJxva

Submission is in to Apple Podcasts, but these technical specs are a little more challenging to navigate. I'll get there and will report when it becomes avail. I can also submit to Google and Stitcher podcast apps if there’s interest in me doing so. First episode is a dialog with the one and only Big City Grower, Garry Gantner. Hope you enjoy, we had fun recording it and I’m looking forward to doing many more!

Jim Stawekci of Butler, PA won the Bigpumpkins.com NCAA March Madness tournament challenge organized this year by Scott Holub. Several growers donated seeds to the top finishers:

1st Stawekci
4th (tie) Cindy in Littlerock; Wixom Grower; Weiss Piece
2nd Wolfpack83
It was an exciting tourney, with many surprises!
3rd mudcat 869

Rick Spaziani, aka Garden Rebel is trying to promote his seed for a tomato contest: 7.10 Foss Big Zac x 8.22 Marley Domingo = 4.28 Spaziani .The 7.10 Foss and it’s offspring consistently grow heavy tomatoes including the 7.19 LaRue. The 8.22 Marley Domingo is one of the largest and most beautiful tomatoes I’ve ever seen. Look in Porkchops (Steve Marley) 2017 diary any you’ll see for yourself. Plus, the 8.22 is from the 5.95 Konieczny which grew the 9.44 Sutherland world record. To entice people to grow this cross I am having a competition with just this seed. Interested growers will get 5 seeds of the Big Marley. Send your request to rickspaziani@yahoo.com plus you mailing address. I will send the bubble. I already have sent seeds to the growers who participated and weighed in last years Zachart competition plus sent to a few others. Eighteen people have seeds including big growers such as Chris Konieczny, Q-Tip, Porkchop, Jim Sherwood, Jack LaRue, Mike Schmitt, Jeff Treece, etc.

Rules:
1. Send me a photo or post a photo on your BP diary of your Big Marley on a certified scale showing your weight.
2. You can enter as many times as you want from your 5 plants.
3. Tomatoes cannot be damaged and must follow the GPC tomato weigh-off guidelines.
4. The competition will end on October 31st, 2019.

Prizes:
1st $100 + glass tomato paper weight.
2nd $50 + glass tomato paper weight.
3rd $25 + glass tomato paper weight.
$50 bonus for the top grower over 6 lbs.
A grower cannot win more than one prize.

(Garden Rebel aka Rick Spaziani) will grow the Big Marley but will not compete in my own contest.
Please don’t request seeds with the intention of not growing them for this contest. I do not want hoarders! This effort is in the ongoing quest for the first 10 lb tomato!! need ten more growers as my seed count is getting low. If you already have seeds, and I know who you are, don't request again. Thank you, rickspaziani@yahoo.com for requests or questions.
Virtual Early Tomato Weigh Off

The GPC has set up an avenue to record and recognize weights of tomatoes harvested prior to the annual weigh off season. This is called the Virtual Early Tomato Weigh off.

• The GPC understands that a grower does not know when he/she will harvest their heaviest tomato of the season. In the interest of fairness to the growers and of genetic record keeping the GPC will accept additional early tomato entries, however only the grower’s heaviest 3 entries will be marked official. All additional entries by the grower will be marked as exhibition or DMG.

• Results will be recorded on the Early Tomato listing, on the GPC info page at Big Pumpkins.com.

• Once a grower has 3 official entries in the early tomato contest any additional entries must be heavier than the smallest of the grower’s previous 3 official entries. The larger entry will replace the lightest of the three. The replaced tomato/ tomatoes will be marked as exhibition.

• The GPC will accept entries up until September 30th of each year.

• Any tomato entered via the early submission Virtual Tomato contest are not eligible at any other GPC event. A fruit can only be entered once.

• Early entries must be weighed on a legal for trade scale certified by NTEP (national type evaluation program) such as a supermarket deli scale.

• The grower must present a copy of the Early Tomato Contest entry form to the scale operator and witness/witnesses for them to read, check the condition boxes, sign and provide their contact information.

• Growers must supply pictures of their tomato on the scale. The readout should be visible or a weigh slip. Additional pictures required of their entry are of the top, bottom, sides, trimmed stem and a picture of the scale last certification test approval sticker.

• Early entries with a circumference of less than 25 inches must be witnessed by an impartial third party witness, such as the scale operator who has read and understands the rules.

• Tomatoes with a circumference of 25 to 28 inches need to be witnessed by two impartial third party witnesses who have read and understand the rules.

• Any Tomato in excess of 28 inches circumference challenging the world record must be verified by a GPC rep, either in person or by his/her designate and one other impartial witness. Additional pictures are required, the scale last check test approval sticker, the (taped) circumference, the trimmed stem, top, blossom and sides of the tomato. A video showing the areas mentioned would suffice.

• Entries must adhere to the tomato rules as set out below.

Continued next page...
Virtual Early Tomato Weigh Off... Continued

• Growers must complete and submit the “Early Submission Form for Tomatoes” as found on the GPC web site, resources section, email to: tomato@gpc1.org within 24 hrs of the specimen being weighed.

**Tomato Eligibility Rules**

1) All tomatoes must be healthy; a healthy tomato must be free of significant soft spots or leakage.

2) Skin may be cracked but not leaking.

3) Tomatoes must be weighed on certified scales, calibrated to no less than 2 decimal places in pounds or pounds and ounces, Kilograms and grams, i.e.: 6 pounds 5.53 ounces or 6.35 lbs).

4) Stem must be cut within 1 inch or 25.4 millimeters of the tomato.

5) Green fruit will be allowed for weigh-off purposes.

6) No frozen specimens will be allowed.

7) The entirety of the fruit flesh must be connected – pictures or video must show this.

The GPC Steering Committee reserves the rights to make the final decision with contested entries. To contact witnesses, scale owners/operators or other interested parties as deemed necessary.
**Identification**
- Half inch long moth
- Orange abdomen with black spots
- Metallic green top wings with clear secondary wings
- Flat, tannish-brown eggs that are about 1/25th" across
- Larvae are whitish-cream with black heads up to 1" long

**Prevention & Treatment**
Crop rotation is key! SVB's will burrow and pupate from last year's infected planting sites.
Place floating row cover over your vines beginning in late June, or as soon as you see your 1st SVB moth. Leave these protective barriers in place for 2 weeks, securing them down. Note: Do NOT use row covers if you are planting in last year’s patch.
Use a SVB trap. You can even make one: Fill a small container with water and yellow food coloring, as the moths are attracted to yellow. They will drown themselves.
Chemicals with the active ingredients bifenthrin or midaclorpid are useful controls.
Seek and manually smash or remove the eggs.

**Life Cycle/Habits**
Squash vine borers are a daytime-flying moth that live in the eastern half of the United States. They emerge from cocoons in the ground in late June and early July then get to work breeding and laying eggs on pumpkin plants. They will lay their single eggs at the base of the plant along the vines that will hatch is about a week’s time, then bore into the stems and vines to feed. As the larvae feed, their bodies block the flow of water to the plant. If nothing is done to stop them, they will continue to feed for 4-6 weeks. By then, the plant will be severely wilted:

Next, the larvae burrow out of the plant and into the top layer of soil to pupate through the fall, winter and spring. They are an extremely destructive pest, and despite the fact that they can only produce one generation a year, they can bring down a plant very quickly if left unchecked.

Look for holes in your vines and stems and the tell-tale sign of mushy tan frass (excrement) within the vine. If you catch them early, they can be extracted from the vine.

**Identifying the insect correctly can help you to treat it effectively!**
I was honored to receive a message several weeks ago inquiring if I would be interested in sharing what I do regarding tissue testing and the logic behind my testing program. That seemed simple enough until I started trying to put together a rough draft. Growing a big pumpkin does not necessarily make you an expert and I certainly am not. What I hope to do is give some insight behind “my program”, what I do, when I do it and how I go about accomplishing my plan. I think back to some advice I was given from a true expert in the field (John Taberna, owner of Western Laboratories) several years ago. He said, “It appears Atlantic Giant Pumpkin plants don’t read from the same textbook I learned from.” Pumpkin growers are constantly evolving, trying new ideas, new techniques and new products. What we do in our gardens would be nearly impossible to duplicate on a large scale, so in some ways, we are all helping to write the next “text book”. I hope you can look at the techniques I use with that same train of thought. What I do might not always be by the label or common practice, but I think that’s why we are all seeing weights most of us never could have imagined not so many years ago.

TO TEST OR NOT TO TEST

Many huge pumpkins have been grown with their growers electing not to tissue test. So….is testing required or necessary to grow at the highest level? The simple answer is “no”. With that said, the idea behind tissue testing is to identify a nutrient excess or deficiency in your plant before the trained eye can detect the issue, then make corrections before it becomes a growth limiting problem. It also serves as a confirmation of what your eyes may be telling you if the excess or deficiency gets to a level where you may visually be seeing problems with your plant. Some growers have had tremendous success “reading” a plant, however, I’m not that good. I look at tissue testing much like doctors who do a blood test on humans. If the test comes back and all nutrients are in the normal range, then life is good, but if any are out of range, it allows me to make corrections and track progress with data to back those adjustments up. Over time, you will start to see commonalities from year to year when certain nutrient levels begin to increase or decrease as well as the amount of foliar, and or drench product necessary to bring that nutrient back into range. This will allow you to build your own program overtime so you can proactively adjust feeding so those nutrient highs or lows can be avoided.

TEST START DATE AND FREQUENCY

For the last few years I have taken my first tissue test 2.5 weeks before my target pollination date (June 15-22). This past year my first sample was sent to the lab late May. I know many don’t start testing until July. I guess my thinking is that I want the plant to be as dialed-in as possible when I pollinate my first pumpkin mid June so that little nugget will have the best shot I can give it to be something special come October.

I test every 2.5 weeks until late August. Samples are sent in a US postal service flat rate box. It takes one day to get the tissue sample to the lab, a couple days to get tested, results are sent back electronically, so altogether it takes three to four days at the longest before results are in hand. I make adjustments if needed to the foliar and drench program the day the results are available. This gives me two full weeks for the plant to grow with the nutrient adjustments before the next sample is taken.
TISSUE TESTING...CONTINUED
BY: STEVE DALETAS

TISSUE TEST LOCATION

Consistency is key: The lab can only analyze what you send. If you send in inconsistent sample, you get inconsistent results, and in turn make incorrect adjustments. Plus, you're throwing money away. I am very methodical in where I take my tissue sample. I always take the fifth leaf counting back from the “cluster” at the end of the secondary. How many secondaries back from the end of the main vine is debatable, and one John has agreed that maybe we need to reevaluate how far back to pull tissue samples from. Either way, choose a number of secondaries counting back from the tip of the main vine and stick with that number as the plant grows. For me, I count six secondaries back from the tip of the main vine.

In the past, I have pulled tissue samples from just one plant and used those results as the basis for adjustments to all plants in my patch. The last two years, I have pulled one leaf from the location described in the paragraph above from my best three plants as I felt this might be a better average of what really is going on in the patch as a whole.

I have also played with testing “older” growth to check for nutrients being robbed (mobile nutrients). Last year I tested the last actively growing (non-dead-headed) secondary on the same two and a half week schedule. I saw very little difference between those test results and what was going on further out on the plant. Where I have seen differences in results is when I tested dead-headed secondaries at or near the back of the plant. I’ll touch on what I do to deal with that later in this article.

FOLIAR AND DRENCH PRODUCTS

This is important: If you're going to test, then have products on hand to make adjustments with when the results become available. I have found once a nutrient gets in the deficient range, it can be very hard to get it back into what would be considered sufficient. Why spend the money to test if you aren't going to actively try to fix the problem?

I have been using a line of Amino Acid based foliar products made by Albion. They are called Metalosates. What I like about them is their products are all water-based so are very easy to mix, and they're designed to be blended together so there is no guessing whether one nutrient will be antagonistic to another or the plant. They produce 8 different individual nutrients (K, Ca, Mg, Cu, B, Zn, Fe and Mn) so you can apply only what you need. The downside is many come in 2.5 gallon containers so you might need to find a few friends to go in with and each take a quart or two.

There are many companies that make entire lines of products. I prefer going with a single company as opposed to mixing and matching as they've done the testing that I would rather not be doing on my plants.

Disclaimer. Albion does not know who I am, this is not an infomercial to promote their products. I'm ving it out be intere: have been...
WHICH LAB TO USE

I use Western Labs in Parma, Idaho. With that said, find a lab you're comfortable with and stick with them. I have seen results vary from lab to lab even when sending identical samples to each. The great thing with Western Labs is John, the owner, will talk to you. He has a passion for pumpkin growers and what we do, and is willing to think outside of the traditional agronomy box knowing what we’re doing has never been done before.

INTERPRET RESULTS, MAKE ADJUSTMENTS

The tissue test results I receive from Western Labs comes with both foliar and drench recommendations. I can’t speak for other labs, but I would assume they do the same. These recommendations are a great place to start. If you’re uncomfortable with what it’s telling you, I would befriend a grower you have confidence in to help you develop a game plan. Most importantly, take good notes. If you take multiple tests throughout the year, this will allow you to look back over time and figure out exactly how much product applied gets you the results you desired. I have cut back the number of tests I do annually as I have seen very similar patterns year after year. This has allowed me to tailor a feeding program to proactively adjust nutrients and better avoid those excesses or deficiencies.

FOLIAR APPLICATION METHODS, FREQUENCY

There are many ways to apply foliar products: overhead irrigation, hose end sprayer, pump sprayer, or mist blower; There is no best way. Each have there pluses and minuses. The size of the patch, available time, money and proximity of neighbors are probably the main factors when considering which is best for you. For me, efficiency is critical. I use a Stihl mist blower which allows me to very evenly apply foliar products in a time efficient manner, plus I grow in the middle of 100 acres, so no one is complaining when I fire up an engine at 6 in the morning.

I prefer to make foliar applications early morning prior to the sun’s rays reaching the leaves. Even though the applied nutrients move into the plant almost immediately, by spraying early you prevent the product from drying on the leaves before it can be absorbed.

When asked how often to spray the best analogy I have is to liken it to how most home owners fertilize their lawns. Typically you see the grass growth start to slow and the deep green fade. We throw on a bag of fertilizer, water, and two weeks later the lawn explodes. Works great for grass, but that’s the last thing we want for our pumpkins. Even, steady growth is the best approach to ensure you will have a pumpkin to show in October. Most growers now feed daily through their drenching system. Why should foliar feeding be any different? I don’t feed the leaves everyday, but a wise man in the field made it very clear to me. “Foliar more often at lower rates.” If you can foliar twice a week, cut the weekly rate in half. If you can do so three times a week, cut it in thirds. For me, my goal is to foliar feed twice a week with an extra spray on the back half of the plant once a week starting early June. I’ll explain why the extra spray under “mobile nutrients” below.
TISSUE TESTING...CONTINUED

CAUSE OF OLDER LEAF DETERIORATION

There are many factors that contribute to the back end of the plant failing early. Since this is an article on tissue testing, I'll focus on how this possibly could be a contributing factor. Most agree that every time we apply a product on the leaves we do some damage. With that said, foliar feeding is very effective in getting certain nutrients into the plant.

I purchased an EC meter a couple of years ago so I could better educate myself as to which products I'm using that could possibly be causing some of this premature aging. In a nut shell, an EC meter measures salts, and salts burn. The more salt we put on the leaf, the more we burn the leaf. Before the season started, I tested all the products I intended to foliar apply at the recommended high and low rates. With that data and the tissue test results, I was able to develop a game plan. My goal was to keep each foliar application EC reading below 2.0. That was very easy to do with some nutrients and next to impossible with others. I think there is still a lot to learn regarding how high of an EC reading a pumpkin leaf can take and how frequently it can take it and still have the older leaves contributing to the pumpkin's growth late season. But, knowledge that we may be causing some of the damage is where it starts. That's all part of rewriting the “text book”.

Here are the EC readings on products I use tested at “low” rates:

Cal Mag Max = 9.6; Potassium Metalosate = 3.8; TKO = 3.3; Bloomerang = 2.8; Phyton 35 = 1.6
Calcium Metalosate =1.0; Pristine = 0.9; Magnesium Metalosate = 0.7; Manganese Metalosate = 0.5
Zinc Metalosate = 0.5; Prevam = 0.4; Iron Metalosate = 0.3; Boron Metalosate = 0.2; Quadris = 0
Copper Metalosate = 0; Daconil = 0; Telstar = 0

I did not alter labeled recommendations with regards to rates when applying fungicides. But I did consider either taking them out of my rotation or reducing the number of times I applied them if their EC reading was high at recommended rates.

MOBILE NUTRIENTS

Another long conversation I've had with John involved an observation I have every year regarding the older leaves on the back end of my plant. It seems they fail early. With disease issues under control, John assured me that this is normal. He suggested I look up the meaning of the word “Senescence”. It is “The condition or process of deterioration with age.”
When an Atlantic giant plant really gets growing, the roots have a hard time moving enough of the required nutrients from the roots to the far, actively growing end of the plant. If unable to pull enough nutrients from the soil, the plant is designed to pull certain nutrients from the oldest growth, essentially sacrificing itself to sustain the newer growth. This is great, except we need that old growth to be healthy later in the year if the goal is to compete with some of the huge pumpkins currently being grown. Certain nutrients (N, P, K, and Mg) are mobile, meaning they can be pulled out of the older growth and translocated to the newer growth, whereas other nutrients do not have the ability to translocate. I asked John what he thought about supplementing the oldest growth with those “mobile” nutrients to try and replenish what was being pulled out, thus possibly delaying the early deterioration of the older growth. He thought it made perfect sense and felt it could possibly give me healthier older leaves later into the season. N, P, K and Mg are all macro nutrients, so it’s difficult to get enough into the plant using only foliar feeding. I do apply these to the older growth as an “extra” spray once a week.

**LASTLY**

Tissue testing isn’t for everyone. But the principles behind testing and the knowledge learned still apply. Read up on mobile nutrients. The location on the plant where leaves may but struggling allows you to zero-in on which group of nutrients may be causing the issue. From there, pull up a nutrient deficiency chart from the internet. This will help you zero-in on which nutrient is most likely causing the symptoms you are seeing. Then, make adjustments to your feeding schedule and watch your plant respond.

Best of luck this year. I hope you all grow a new personal best.
Comparing Electrical Conductivity and Parts Per Million

-Cindy Tobeck

In his Tissue Testing article, Steve Daletas outlined how he tested anything he sprayed on his pumpkins with an Electrical Conductivity (EC) meter. I too have recently begun to test all of my nutrient solutions, yet I am using a different type of probe that tells me parts per million (ppm). What is the difference? Parts per million, also known as total dissolved solids (TDS) measures the dissolved salts in a solution. Fertilizers are basically solid salts that have been dissolved into water that will be absorbed through plant roots ionically. Typically, a ppm meter, like mine, will take an EC reading of a solution in micro Siemens (mS), and then convert and display a reading in ppm. What’s kind of crazy is that the manufacturers of various ppm meters use three different conversion methods from ppm to EC, depending on where in the world you live! So when discussing ppm with growers from other parts of the country, or across the globe, you may not be making accurate comparisons.

Electrical Conductivity (EC), on the other hand, is a measurement of the ability of something to conduct electricity; the dissolved nutrients in the fertilizer solution are capable of conducting electricity. EC is measured in milli Siemens (mS) or micro Siemens (μS). There is a single standard measure of EC, so it is a much more accurate means of describing nutrient strength.

Typically in the United States, growers will use a ppm meter with a 0.50 conversion ratio. So if you're like me with a ppm meter, you can see how your nutrient solutions compare with Steve Daletas’ EC meter readings. Here is a conversion chart for EC to PPM:

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<th>EC micro Siemens (μS)</th>
<th>EC milli Siemens (mS)</th>
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SETTING UP YOUR PUMPKIN
BY: RON WALLACE

Pollination time is right around the corner! Many growers just getting started always like to ask what do you place under your pumpkin? Here is what many of us do in the Southern New England Giant Pumpkin Growers to set up our pumpkins for a season’s worth of growth.

Materials needed:
1- ½ sheet 4x8 ¾” plywood (Don’t skimp on the plywood thickness.)
1- bag play sand
2- 5x5 sheets of mill fabric (or another similar material)

Setting up your pumpkin is always a 2-person job; do not rush it. Try to do it later in the day when the vines are more flexible, and if you have a small backup pumpkin on the vine NEVER take it off until number 1 pumpkin is set. Accidents do happen, so I take no chances when setting up the pumpkins. After number 1 pumpkin is safely set, you can then remove your back up if you like at this time. Some growers will wait until day 20 to remove the backup pumpkin.

The first thing to do is to cut a few taproots on each side of the pumpkin so it can be safely lifted off the ground. I will also remove any side vine at this time that I think will interfere with its growth. This is also a good time to swing your main vine to get the perfect angle for growth. The baby pumpkin skin is so smooth at this point of the season; I would protect it with a soft cloth when lifting it for vine adjustment and plywood/fabric placement.

Setting Up...Continued next page
Next, I will carefully rake out the area that the plywood will be placed and tamp down the soil by walking over the area. You want a firm soil under your plywood as it helps the pumpkin grow a flatter bottom. Have someone stand behind the pumpkin and gently lift it off the ground, sliding one piece of mill fabric under the pumpkin as far as you can. Place the fabric pointy-end first in a diamond shape beneath the fruit. Spread a small layer of play sand on top of the fabric.

Now place your sheet of plywood pointy-end first under the pumpkin as far as you can onto the first layer of fabric and sand. Spread a thin layer of sand on top of your plywood, then you are ready for your final piece of fabric. Once again, gently lift your pumpkin up and slide the fabric pointy-end first under the pumpkin as far as it will go. In years past, we would only have 1 piece of fabric on top of the plywood, but last year we added the second piece, and it made the pumpkins slide much easier when positioning them during the season. Play sand can also be added on your fabric as your pumpkin grows to help it easily slide across the fabric. One important tip if using mill fabric and sand: be careful as I found out a few times that the surface was slick enough for me to take a tumble.

The final step is to cover the pumpkin with a white sheet, keeping the stem as the only exposed area. Best of luck to everyone this year!
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- Steve Geddes
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**ERRATA:**
The Spring Common Ground failed to mention Debbie Gantner was in the 4800 pound club. It should read:

**2018 4800 Pound Club**
Team-Boyce, Holly – 4871.0 lbs
Team-Boyce, Daniel – 4871.0 lbs
Debbie Gantner – 4,837.0 lbs
Team-Johnston, Art – 4802.7 lbs
Team-Butler, John – 4802.7 lbs
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ORDER BY AUGUST 30
SHIP DATE SEPT 20
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SHIP DATE DECEMBER 13

BIG SHOW WINNERS:

Now that the Big Show is behind us, don’t forget to cash in your award certificates for GPC merchandise! Visit the website www.gpc1.org for a full selection of shirts, coats, hats and other logo wear!

Also, site coordinators, the logo wear makes a GREAT addition to your prize packages to growers, or as a token of gratitude for your site volunteers and your valuable sponsors!
SUBMIT ARTICLES TO THE GPC COMMON GROUND!

Thank you for reading Edition 2 of The GPC Common Ground! It is my hope to publish a newsletter that reflects the interests of giant fruit and vegetable growers as well as provide educational content, grower features, event recaps, club spotlights, and regional highlights.

It is the intent of the GPC board to provide this newsletter to growers worldwide as a means to exchange information, grow community, and advance the weights of giant produce.

Article submissions are welcome! GPC Common Ground will be by growers, for growers.

GPC Common Ground will be published a minimum of three times per year and sent via email to subscribers. To subscribe, visit with GPC website: www.gpc1.org. Archived newsletters will be posted on the GPC website.

Please direct feedback, photos, inquiries and article submissions to:

Cindy Tobeck

cindy@gpc1.org

Please use subject line: Common Ground

HAPPY SUMMER...GET POLLINATING!