Giant Vegetable Growers of Ontario

OVER THE TOP

Summer 2016

www.gvgo.ca 4376 Hwy 35N Cameron Ontario K0M 1G0

President's Message

Phil Joynson

Summer is well under way in Ontario and we've already had more days of 30+ C degrees than we had in all of 2015. At least growers can spend more time doing patch work than spending time mowing the lawn as most folks' lawns look like brown door mats right now. Personally, the 2016 growing season has been most trying. You name it and it's probably happened in my patch this year. I've had heaters failing, vermin ripping out entire plants, insect infestations, I accidently knocked a bloom off the same days as pollination, had mutated blooms that weren't worth pollinating and to top things off I had several tons of tree falling into my patch and wiping out my irrigation system. If I were a younger man, I would have probably walked away from this year's growing season. If pumpkin growing has taught me anything over the years it's to accept things you can't change and move on. Hopefully I can get a decent pumpkin to the scales and just have fun with the comradery of the hobby.

Thanks to all the growers that made it out to the GVGO Spring seminar in Solina. I think people enjoyed themselves and I know I learned a few things even after all these years growing. As a club we discussed a few things that had to be addressed, such as fund raising, and the ordinary grower learned what actually has to be done to keep the club on an even keel. We also unveiled the "One Ton Challenge". This program has caused quite a bit of talk in the growing community in Canada. We've had lots of seed requests from non-pumpkin growers through a Canadian gardening magazine that ran an article about our challenge. Hopefully, this will bring in more growers to the hobby. I've noticed a few of the weigh offs have advertised the potential pay out from the "One Ton Challenge" in their prize structure. That's a great use of the contest and I'm sure it will cause more interest in their weigh-off. If any Canadian weigh off site that didn't get a "One Ton Challenge" banner and would like one, please contact the GVGO through the club web site.

The GVGO annual patch tour will be held in the Port Elgin area this year on **Saturday the 13th of August**. This event, as always, is free to all GVGO members. Details are in this issue of the club newsletter. Bring a guest! This event is always great so circle the date on the calendar. As usual a lunch will be provided.

Phil Joynson

A SUMMERTIME TIP

If you do things right, your soil test results at the end of the growing season should be the same as the ideal conditions stated on your soil test at the beginning of the season. Think about it…

Editor's Note

Canada is a world leader in growing long gourds and field pumpkins. This issue focuses on field pumpkins. We rounded up a few of our own experts and even went abroad to provide you with as much information as possible about growing them. In my humble opinion, if us GVGOers treat field pumpkins like we do Atlantic Giants, we will remain at the top of the field (*pun not necessarily intended*).

Here in the Netherlands we are having the most challenging year in the history of modern giant vegetable growing. Excessive rain, flooding, storms, hail, cold and just a general lack of sun have already cost us many plants and certainly a lot of lbs and inches. Commercial growers are rushing to buy bad weather insurances as many crops have already been ruined. For us, no insurance, but the determination to think up something to better protect us from the more and more challenging elements.

Hoping you are all in good health (which can be more challenging than the weather) and, regardless of what the scale says at the end, you enjoy yourself while growing your stuff and meeting likeminded people.

Bradley Wursten

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GVGO News

GVGO SUMMER PATCH TOUR TO GREY BRUCE SATURDAY, AUGUST 13TH, 2016

8:30 AM
READY TO SERVE COFFEE AT BOB AND ELAINE MACKENZIE'S

9:00 AM
HOSTS BOB AND ELAINE MACKENZIE'S PATCH
3064 BRUCE RD. 15 RR #2 TIVERTON,
ONTARIO N0G 2T0
519-368-7797
(JUST WEST OF THE STOVE PARLOR)

9:45 AM
LEAVE FOR DOUG AND LOUISE COURT'S

10:00 AM
HOSTS DOUG AND LOUISE COURT'S PATCH
98 DOLL ROAD, RR #2 PORT ELGIN,
ONTARIO N0H 2C6
519-832-5687

10:50 AM
LEAVE TO GO TO JEAN AND BILL MARSHALL'S

11:00 AM
HOSTS JEAN AND BILL MARSHALL'S PATCH
467 PEEL ST SOUTH, SOUTHAMPTON,
ONTARIO N0H 2L0
519-797-5721

11:30 AM
LEAVE FOR DAVE AND BARB McCALLUM'S PATCH

12:15 PM
HOSTS DAVE AND BARB McCALLUM

#12 BROCKTON RD 25, OFF HWY#4, WALKERTON
519-364-5422
(ACROSS FROM MORRY'S TRAILER SALES)

12:45 PM
LEAVE FOR JOHN TWELVES' PATCH

1:00 PM
HOST JOHN TWELVES
261046 CONC 18 EXTENSION WEST GREY, RR #4 HANOVER, ONT. N4N 3C1
(JUST SOUTH OF HANOVER)
519-367-2876

1:30 PM
LEAVE FOR DAVE AND BARB'S HOUSE

1:45 PM
HOSTS DAVE AND BARB McCALLUM
360, 3RD AVENUE, HANOVER, ONTARIO N4N 2B2
(TURN LEFT ON 7TH STREET AND FOLLOW TO 3RD AVENUE ON RIGHT)
GARDEN PARTY WITH LUNCH AND REFRESHMENTS

ACCOMMODATIONS:
Accommodations are limited this week end as there is a major ball tournament in Walkerton this weekend and the Best Western is full.

Please call one of us and we will work to find you something if needed.

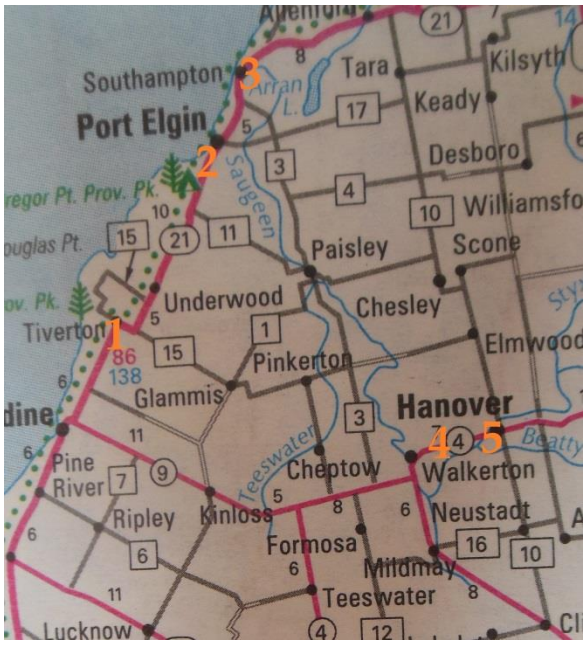
There are several camp grounds available if you are a camper.

You can try these hotels:
Canadiana Motel and Fitness - Hanover
519-364-1580

Travellers Inn – Hanover
519-364-1911
1-800-801-8398

We have an airport at Hanover and can arrange for transportation.

Come and enjoy Ontario's West Coast with the prettiest sunsets.



A bit of gossip…

Ryan Hoelke of Eganville has several very nice plants going with pollinations made at the beginning of July. He has his own 1463 going as well as a 1625 Ganter and 1725 Harp. It seems he has the watering down to a fine art. Hoping to see him bring a big one to the scales this fall.

Featured Giant Vegetable

FIELD PUMPKIN

by Iwan Horde

In 2014, the Dutch grower, Iwan Horde broke the European record for field pumpkin at 164.7 lbs, though the record only held for a short time. A year later he did finish first in Europe.

To be honest, I'm not an expert on growing field pumpkins, even if I did grow the Dutch record. Of course it begins with the right seeds. In 2014 I grew the 103 MacKinnon, 181 MacKinnon and 128 Lyons.

Soil preparation

In 2014 I offered up a piece of grassland to make room for a number of field pumpkins. The grass was dug in with a backhoe and disappeared about 50cm under the ground. After that I added a bit of magnesium (because my plants always seem to have a deficiency) and bone meal to stimulate root growth. After the soil was tilled, I planted out the plants I had germinated in the greenhouse.

Plant size

The plants were slow to start (possibly because of the new soil, or just too cold?) but later on they picked up speed. Each plant was given a space of 15 feet long by 10 feet wide.

Growth

A field pumpkin produces fruit quite easily. My plants had nice big fruit already early on. What I did notice is that not all fruit have the same shape. It is best to select the right fruit according to shape. This means letting the pumpkin grow for a while before deciding which one to keep. In contrast to Atlantic Giants, it is possible to have more than one fruit per plant.

During the growth period I shaded the fruit from the sun to even out temperatures and prevent splitting. During the growing season I was only able to water little and infrequently.

At the end of the season the 103 MacKinnon weighed in at 164.7 lbs, which was almost a doubling of the Dutch record and for a short time the new European record. The 181 MacKinnon weighed in at 124.8 lbs, which placed second. The rest of the field pumpkins were in the 60-80 lb range.

Changes

It might be better to grow larger plants (15x15 ft). In any case, the largest pumpkins seem to grow far out on the main vine and should be selected according to shape with the preference for elongated ones.

Fertilizer

Apart from magnesium and bone meal I used dried manure which is a lot easier to use than the real stuff and is free from diseases and weed seeds.

Water

Like with all giant vegetables, pumpkins need a constant and even supply of water. Use walking boards to prevent soil compaction.

Field Pumpkin Diseases

Field pumpkins are subject to all kinds of diseases, some of them depending on where you live. The five most important diseases for most of Canada and the more northern states are sclerotinia rot, phytophthora blight, powdery mildew, fusarium and virus diseases. Less common diseases, which we won't go into, include bacterial wilt (very rare, and sometimes confused with fusarium which also causes wilting), microdochium blight (only in the middle and southern states), black rot (gummy stem blight) and downy mildew (mostly southern states).

Sclerotinia Rot

The Sclerotinia fungus affects a wide variety of crop plants. Many vegetables including tomatoes, beans, and carrots, as well as cucurbits, are susceptible. The pathogen produces resilient structures, called sclerotia, that survive in our soils indefinitely. Therefore, once an outbreak occurs in a field, the potential for future outbreaks will remain high.

Sclerotinia rot is a cool season disease, hence its appearance on pumpkins in years when summer temperatures are below normal. The most obvious symptoms of Sclerotinia rot occur on pumpkin vines (stems) and fruit. During periods of cool temperature and high relative humidity, a white, cottony mold develops around water soaked infection sites.

Pathogen survival: Fungal structures (sclerotia) in soil and infested crop residue.
Pathogen spread: Wind dispersed spores produced on sclerotia and mechanical movement of sclerotia.
Important environmental factor: Infection tends to occur in dead tendrils or through withered flowers still attached to developing fruit. Therefore, the disease is more likely to occur when extended periods of below normal temperatures and wet weather occur while flowering is abundant.
Disease resistance: None.
Cultural control: Rotations with non-host crops (cereal grains) will limit the potential for damage to subsequent vegetable crops.
Chemical control: Fungicides may be effective if applied to young plants that could be threatened during cool, wet summers

Phytophthora Blight

Phytophthora blight has become one of the most serious threats to pumpkin production in midwestern states. Severe losses have been reported throughout the northeastern quarter of the U.S. during the last decade.

The disease is caused by a fungal pathogen that infects many different vegetable hosts, survives

in our soils indefinitely, and spreads quickly within and among fields in seasons with typical midwestern temperatures and rainfall patterns. Symptoms on pumpkins often are discovered first on the surface of mature fruit, but vines of infected plants eventually collapse and die. The soft rot associated with a rapidly expanding area of white, cottony mold on any part of the fruit is a very characteristic symptom of the disease.

Pathogen survival: Resilient spores that survive in soils indefinitely; infested crop residue.
Pathogen spread: Mechanical spread with soil on farm implements and dispersal from plant to plant via splashing water and wind.
Important environmental factor: Phytophthora blight can be especially severe when late summer weather is cool and wet.
Disease resistance: None.
Cultural control: Cultural practices such as long crop rotations may reduce severity for future crops. Avoiding fields that are poorly drained and have a history of the disease will serve as a deterrent to severe outbreaks. Practices aimed at avoiding standing water in fields will improve efficiency of fungicide applications by reducing disease pressure.
Chemical control: Protective fungicides such as chlorothalonil, mancozeb, and fixed copper may reduce yield losses caused by Phytophthora blight.

Powdery Mildew

Powdery mildew can result in serious losses on squash and pumpkins. The pathogen is believed to overwinter locally. It produces airborne spores that enable new infections to increase rapidly throughout an unprotected field. Powdery mildew is one of the simplest diseases to diagnose. The white, powdery mold first appears on lower stems and petioles. As the disease continues to develop, the white moldy spots occur on the underside of leaves. Symptoms on the upper leaf surfaces usually signal a severe outbreak. The pathogen does not infect pumpkin fruit, but may weaken pumpkin stems.

Pathogen survival: Spores that survive locally among soil and crop residue.
Pathogen spread: Spores are wind-dispersed to neighboring plants and fields. They may be carried in wind currents for miles over large geographic areas.
Important environmental factor: Unlike many other infectious diseases, powdery mildew may become severe during extended periods of dry weather.
Disease resistance: Most jack-o'-lantern pumpkins appear to be quite susceptible. "Big Max" types of pumpkins are less susceptible.
Cultural control: Normal rotations with non-cucurbit crops will help prevent serious early season epidemics.
Chemical control: Several fungicides are effective against powdery mildew. Systemic fungicides can be effective if applied at appropriate times during the season, even if symptoms are not obvious. A mix of 1 part 2% milk and 9 parts water sprayed on and under the leaves can be used preventively but will not help once the disease has spread.

Fusarium Crown & Fruit Rots

Fusarium crown rot is caused by different Fusarium pathogens than those that cause Fusarium wilt diseases, even though wilting is

part of the disease syndrome. Some crown rot fungi also are responsible for a characteristic fruit rot that occurs on pumpkins. Initial symptoms on pumpkins include a general yellowing of the entire plant; over the subsequent 2-4 weeks, the entire plant will wilt, collapse, and decay. Close inspection of stems of affected plants will reveal a water soaked or necrotic area at or just below the soil line. Fruit symptoms vary dependent upon the specific Fusarium pathogen involved. Lesions may be small, dry, and pitted, or larger sunken areas covered with gray or white mold.

Pathogen survival: Resilient spores that survive in soils for indefinite periods of time.
Pathogen spread: Mechanical spread with soil on farm implements from year to year.
Important environmental factor: Conditions responsible for outbreaks of these diseases are largely unknown.
Disease resistance: None reported.
Cultural control: Long rotations of non-cucurbit crops will help to slowly reduce Fusarium populations in soil. Substantial losses will occur if fields with a history of the disease are planted in successive seasons. However, the disease can occur in fields with no history of disease or pumpkin production.
Chemical control: None.

Virus Diseases

Virus diseases of pumpkins (and squash) may be caused by any of several different pathogens including types of the mosaic virus. Leaves of virus-infected plants often appear mottled and distorted. The extent of crop loss due to virus disease is highly correlated with the crop growth stage at which the virus becomes established in the field. Pumpkin plants infected early in their development (near or before the time of flowering) are severely affected and produce few fruit, and most of the pumpkins that are produced are likely to be misshapen or off-color. However, plants infected after fruit reach full size may not show any effect on yield or quality. Late-season pumpkins are especially prone to losses associated with virus diseases.

Pathogen Survival: Viruses survive in infected weed hosts in fence rows, wooded acres, and non-cultivated fields. Some are seed-borne.
Pathogen spread: Insect vectors (especially aphids) and mechanical operations that disturb plants and bruise leaves and vines.
Important environmental factor: Aphids appear in fields during periods of hot, dry weather, but do not necessarily remain in fields for days or weeks.
Disease resistance: None.
Cultural control: Early planted fields tend to have less damage than those that are planted later. Control weeds within and around fields.
Chemical control: Attempts to control insects for virus disease control may be futile, because insects may transmit the virus before insecticides are effective.

Adapted from an article published by Purdue University in Indiana.

Field Pumpkin Ancestors 2015

by Alan Eaton

This is the story of the origin of the top GPC field pumpkins of 2015. The category is special because it started from common FP varieties sold by seed companies and now after seven years of GPC competition it is possible to trace the pedigrees and see what has happened over that time. Field pumpkins became an official GPC category in 2009. Before that Windsor NS, Canfield OH, the PGVG in Oregon and maybe other sites held local competitions.

To see what has happened up to now I started with the top 30 official FPs on the 2015 GPC list and made pedigrees going back 4 generations. Then starting with the mothers "parents" I counted the occurrences of individual specimens, those of 2 or more are shown below. In each year the relative number of occurrences indicates the importance of that pumpkin in the modern gene pool.

Note that in 2011 John MacKinnon amazingly grew two 162s, both world records, from identical parents, but now it is impossible to separate them in the records so they are treated here as one. John beat his own WR in 2012, while Quinn Werner set a new WR of 209 pounds. Then in 2014 Johns' 211 pounder set a new WR that stands to this date.

The genes of these 30 field pumpkins are the survivors in a very competitive field. For example in 2012 there were 247 taken to competition but only the 7 shown above survive in any significant number.

2013		
OH	146 Razo	4
ON	121 MacKenzie	2
NS	120 Ansems	2

2012		
PA	151 Snyder	10
PA	**209 Werner**	8
NS	181 MacKinnon	6
OR	125 Treece	3
OR	152 Daletas	2
NB	137 Ebbett	2
NS	97 Dill	2

2011		
NS	**181 MacKinnon**	15
NS	103 MacKinnon	10
OH	150 Razo	9
ON	85 Eaton	7
WA	80 LaRue	3
PEI	142 Aten	2
OR	114 Starr	2

2010		
NS	142 McInnis	4
OR	111 Sherwood	4
ON	99 Lyons	4

2009		
NY	81 Wolf	50
OR	88 Sherwood	6
OH	137 Orr	4
OH	**154 Orr**	2

2008		
OH	101 Meier	13

2007		
NS	**145 McInnis**	50

2006		
NS	87 McInnis	42
OR	88 Leland	29

2005		
NS	**100 Keel**	8
NS	93 McInnis	8

Where were these 30 grown? NS-10, OR-6, OH-5, ON-3, PA-2, NB-1, WA-1, PE-1, NY-1 total=30

Which original seed company varieties have survived? Well, here are the interesting facts as told to me.

Doug Keel started with **Gold Rush** (1).
Fenton McInnis used **Howden** (2).
Neal Leland and Chuck Meier added **Phat Jack** (3) to the mix.
Glenn Orr added **Conestoga Special** (4) genes.

The seed companies claim these varieties will grow up to about 40 pounds. Great growers and careful seed selection have taken that weight up 5 times. Will 6 and 7 times be possible? I think in due course growers will do it. No matter what, I find it rewarding to keep track and share with other growers, the history of where they came from.

Ian and Stuart Paton(UK) might be the first to grow long gourds inside a professional greenhouse.

Flashback

by Bradley Wursten

Once in a while growers are asked if they feed their pumpkins milk. For the origin of this story, we go back exactly 150 years.

Burke, Franklin County, New York – 1866

Every morning Almanzo fed his pumpkin, that he was growing for the County Fair. Father had shown him how to raise a milk-fed pumpkin. They had picked out the best vine in the field, and snipped off all the branches but one, and all the yellow pumpkin blossoms but one. Then between the root and the wee green pumpkin they carefully made a little slit on the underside of the vine. Under the slit Almanzo made a hollow in the ground and set a bowl of milk in it. Then he put a candle wick in the milk, and the end of the candle wick he put carefully into the slit.

Every day the pumpkin vine drank up the bowlful of milk, through the candle wick, and the pumpkin was growing enormously. Already it was three times as big as any pumpkin in the field.

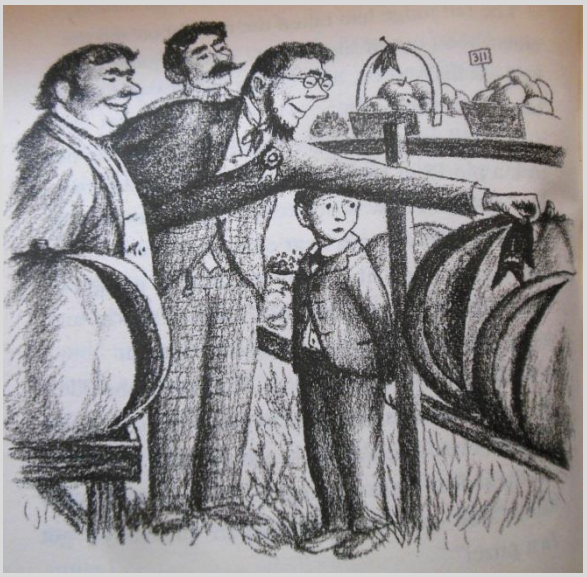
By harvest, *Almanzo's milk-fed pumpkin was enormous. He cut it carefully from the vine, but he could not lift it; he could not even roll it over. Father lifted it into the wagon and carefully hauled it to the barn and laid it on some hay to wait till County Fair time.*

Almanzo's pumpkin *was too big to go in the buggy. Almanzo had polished it carefully. Father had lifted it into the wagon and rolled it onto a soft pile of hay, and they had taken it to the Fair Grounds.*

This morning Almanzo and Father went quickly past the stock-sheds to the display of vegetables and grains. Almanzo caught sight of the pumpkins at once. And there was Almanzo's pumpkin, the largest of them all.

"Don't be too sure of the getting the prize, son," Father said. "It isn't size that counts as much as quality."

At last the judges came to the pumpkins. The judge cut open Almanzo's big pumpkin. Its flesh was a little paler than the other pumpkins. The judges tasted it. Then they talked together for a long time. The tall judge turned around slowly. He held out the blue ribbon and thrust the pin into Almanzo's pumpkin.



Mr. Paddock said: "I never saw a pumpkin that beat it for size. How'd you raise such a big pumpkin, Almanzo?"

"I – I just – I kept hoeing it, and –" he said. Then he knew he was telling a lie. "I raised it on milk. It's a milk-fed pumpkin. Is – is that all right?"
"Yes, that's all right," Mr. Paddock answered.

From: *Farmer Boy* by Laura Ingalls Wilder

Scientific Report

Fish Fertilizer

Fish fertilizer

Fish fertilizer seems quite popular amongst pumpkin growers. The question is if it is a hype or does it have special plant and pumpkin enhancing qualities. To figure that out, let's take a closer look at what it is.

There are three types of fish fertilizers: fish meal, fish emulsion and fish hydrolysate.

Fish meal

Fish meal is a commercial product made from fish or fish parts not fit for human consumption. This can be bones or offal left over after processing fish we eat, or whole fish that contain such a high percentage of bones and oil that they aren't commercially interesting for human consumption.

Fish meal in North America is often made from menhaden and pollock. The fish is cooked, pressed, dried and ground. Fish meal is extremely expensive and is mostly used for livestock and rarely as fertilizer.

NPK: 10 - 6 - 2

Fish emulsion

Fish emulsion is produced from the fluid remains of fish processed for the fish oil and fish meal industry. This is treated with various chemicals and enzymes to break down larger organic molecules into nutrients and other smaller organic molecules. This is then treated by heating it.

NPK: 5 - 1 - 1

Fish hydrolysate

This is basically ground up fish (remains) transformed into liquid. Enzymes are added to break down the larger molecules. No heat is used in the process, making it cheaper than fish emulsion to produce.

NPK: 2 -3 -0

Benefits of fish fertilizer

An overdoses of fish fertilizer will not harm the plants as much as chemical fertilizers can. They generally have a slower release rate and therefore don't need to be applied as often. They do not leach through soil as easily as most other fertilizers and they contain trace elements not always found in their chemical counterparts.

Beware

Fish fertilizer is generally never 100% organic. Chemicals are used in the production process, mostly phosphoric acid and odour inhibitors. And many fish fertilizers are not only fish. They can include kelp, crab, but can even be enhanced with other (chemically produced) nutrients.

Which one to use?

There is great debate between the benefits of emulsion vs hydrolysate–which is better? The reality is that plants can't use most of the large or even small organic molecules from either process. Normally microbes in the soil degrade these to nutrients plants can use. So the argument that heat in the emulsion process is detrimental, makes no sense. It is true that heat will denature proteins, but they need to be denatured for the plants to use them.

The arguments for or against either process is basically a marketing hype. No scientific evidence to support the superiority of either process has yet been published.

Is fish fertilizer really better?

Proponents of fish fertilizer make claims that do not apply to other organic fertilizers. Most seem to be centred around the fact that the liquid fertilizer contains proteins and oils, but plants can't make use of large molecules such as oils and proteins. When these molecules are added to soil, microbes digest them and turn them into small molecules like nitrate, and phosphate. It is only then that plants can make use of these molecules.

Since the large molecules need to be degraded before plants can use them, there is little difference – to the plant – between proteins and oils from fish, cows (manure), or even plants. No scientific research has ever proven that fish fertilizer is better than any other organic fertilizer.

The main thing plants need from fertilizer is a source of nitrogen. Garden soils usually have enough P and K and the other minor nutrients. Nitrogen is the thing that is missing in soils. Given this fact, fish fertilizer is no better or worse than other types of organic fertilizer.

Fish hydrolysate has about 2% nitrogen, which is the same as most organic fertilizers; compost, manure, and coffee grounds. The major problem here is the price of the nitrogen obtained. A hundred grams of chemical fertilizer nitrogen costs around $1.00, while the same amount in fish fertilizer costs around $30.00 (US funds). The fish fertilizer does provide all kinds of trace elements not in the chemical fertilizer including 14% protein, which is the same as cow manure.

Conclusion

In conclusion, is fish fertilizer a hype? Perhaps, but in any case it involves some pretty good marketing. The UK had already stopped using fish meal as a fertilizer in 1910. But it is back. Yet, there has still been no research that has proven fish fertilizer is better than good old cow manure, even though it is dozens of times more expensive. The benefit is that is doesn't contain weed seeds and is a lot easier to handle. On the down side, it is much, much more expensive. But if you can get it for free and make it not stink, go for it.

Weather

by Bradley Wursten

Some say that weather is the big equalizer. In any case it is one of the most important factors in growing giants. So it was time to take a look at the weather in some of the prime growing spots in the world, and in some of the most extreme.

Weather can be measured in many ways. For the purpose of comparison I took a look at the total number of sun hours, average high and low temperatures and amount of rain during the pumpkin growth stage June to September (May to August in Alaska).

These statistics do not include extreme weather conditions like flooding, tornados or hail the size of tennis balls that just hit part of my little country ruining all crops, houses, cars and whatever got in the way.

Some areas, like The Netherlands, are prone to these kinds of natural disasters every year, while some areas might only see something like this once every decade.

Hail destroyed hectares of greenhouses in The Netherlands in late June.

Weather is very complex. While some places have many sun hours, the temperatures are low. Other places have a perfect amount of rain, but at the same time very high temperatures.

Here are the statistics for Toronto, Utrecht (Netherlands), London (England), Anchorage (Alaska), Valencia (Spain), Atlanta (Georgia) and Providence (Rhode Island).

Temperatures

City	High	Low	Warm	Cold
Toronto	24.5	16.0	27	13
Utrecht	21.0	11.5	23	10
London	22.0	13.0	23	11
Anchorage	17.0	8.0	19	4
Valencia	28.0	20.0	30	18
Atlanta	30.0	20.5	32	18
Rhode Island	26.0	16.0	28	13

The second column is the average high for June to September (May to August for Anchorage), followed by the average low for the same period and the warmest daytime temperatures from the warmest growing month followed by the coldest night time temperatures from the coldest month.

Temperature wise, Alaska has it tough in the cold department. Most of us know how the few growers there (pre) heat their greenhouses. Spain and Georgia suffer from too much heat during the entire season. Rhode Island and Toronto have the perfect growing temperatures. Their coldest night time temperature (September) is higher than the highest night time temperature measured in The Netherlands.

Dale Marshall's setup in Alaska.

Rain and Sun

City	Sunlight	Rain
Toronto	980	300
Utrecht	725	300
London	710	190
Anchorage	960	170
Valencia	1110	100
Atlanta	1050	450
Rhode Island	1100	370

Sunlight hours are difficult to measure. In general these figures are derived from measuring all the hours the sun shone and there was less than 80% clouds.

While Utrecht, London and Anchorage have very long days in the summer, they also have much more clouds, rain and drizzling than the cities to the south, meaning they have little benefit. Especially England and The Netherlands have very little sun in comparison to one of the prime growing areas, Rhode Island.

Toronto takes a middle position in the number of sunlight hours and the amount of rain, making it a pretty good area for growing, especially combined with the temperatures.

Atlanta has everything going for it except the high temperatures, while Spain is too dry and warm. The growing season in Anchorage is too short, but the cold, dark and wet climate of England and especially The Netherlands, make them the worst places to grow, if it weren't for greenhouses. Adding heat is still a lot easier than taking it away.

To get the bigger picture for Ontario, I also looked at the statistics for Barrie and Ottawa. Throw them in with Toronto and the entire region has ideal daytime temperatures, but the nights are several degrees colder than in lower New England. It rains just too much and there is just not enough sun to make it the best spot in the world.

You Could Win

$5,000 Cash

Be the 1st Canadian GVGO grower to grow a 1-Ton Pumpkin in Canada & win the $5,000 cash prize.

Challenge is only open to Canadians For more info visit:

www.gvgo.ca

The Giant Vegetable Growers of Ontario (GVGO) presents: The GVGO's Great Canadian 1-Ton Challenge

DO YOU HAVE WHAT IT TAKES TO WIN THE GVGO'S GREAT CANADIAN 1-TON CHALLENGE?

- pumpkin must be grown by a Canadian in Canada
- GVGO membership is required to qualify to win the cash prize. Visit our website at: wwwgvgo.ca
- $500 Bonus if the winning pumpkin is grown from a Canadian GVGO member's seed
- To qualify, winner must donate a percentage of their seeds to the GVGO & make the winning pumpkin or its images (pictures & video) available to the GVGO for their future promotional needs.
-Go to www.gvgo.ca to find all the rules for the Challenge

This Challenge is sponsored solely for the purpose of promoting the Sport of Growing Giant Pumpkins & other giant vegetable varieties in Canada.
Note: Deadline for entries is June 1st/2016

Largest increase in weight over your current Personal Best Contest.

This contest is open to all Canadian GVGO members.
The grower with the largest weight increase over their Personal Best will win $800. It goes up to $1,000 if it's grown on a GVGO seed. (Ex. Grower A has a PB of 800#. If he grows a 1200# pumpkin, his score would be +400. Grower B has a PB of 1200# & grows a 1700# pumpkin, then his score would be +500 & would be the winner.)
The winner of the 1-Ton Challenge cannot qualify for this contest.
Contest will be awarded each year & will run hand-in-hand with the 1-Ton Challenge, but is a separate contest on its own.

Featured Grower

Don Crews

Don Crews of Lloydminster, Alberta has done very well with field pumpkins and watermelons, but also with Atlantic Giants, considering the climate he grows in.

How did you get started growing giants and what kinds do you grow?

I came home one day and there was a packet of Dill's AG seeds on the counter. My wife had seen them in the seed display at a store and thought we should plant them as a joke on my mother. They sat there for a year or two before I decided to plant one. I had no idea what I was doing but when the first fruit grew fast enough to literally explode, I was hooked. My mother has since passed on but she helped with the basic knowledge I needed. I was always in the garden "helping" when I was little.

Once I had started with AGs, it was a progression to watermelons and then field pumpkins. When asked for seeds from growers, they would sometimes send some other varieties as well. I have grown squash and long gourds as well but find that there is too much time required to do it all. I chose to concentrate on the AGs and watermelon.

Can you tell us something about the climate you grow in and the greenhouses you grow in?

Are all your plants in greenhouses or can you grow outside too?

I grow on the prairies but only about 100 km south of the north boreal forest. Our winters are cold and the summers can be hot. Snow starts to melt late March to early April. That means I have plants in the ground when there is still snow cover. The weather in May is highly variable, it could be any temp between -20°C to +35°C. Our last frost date is in the first week of June, though sometimes there is none from April on. Our summers are short with lots of sunshine. Our prime season is from mid-June to mid-August. After that good days can be few.

During the prime summer season there can be many days with temps in the 30's. During the summer we have light from 4:30 am to around 10:00 pm so those plants can take a beating in the heat. My plants appreciate a cool summer when we get one.

Because of the variable weather, I start with 5'x 7' cold-frames that are heated with electric heaters, and soil heat cables. When the plants outgrow them, the melon shack and the patch on the south end of the yard get converted to poly hoop-frame type greenhouses about 54" high, 16' wide and 28' long for the melon and 20' long for the AG. I let the vines run out the sides of the AG shack. I need the shacks up to protect the plants from the wind. It's not as bad as southern Alberta but there are many days of

50 km/h winds, not to mention the thunderstorms and hail.

The north patch gets converted to a larger greenhouse style hoop-house about 20' wide by 30' long. I installed some 3" air tubes to circulate warm air through the soil on that one. By the end of the season I'll know how well that works.

I have a metal hooped greenhouse as well. That was my main AG patch but I'm having some soil problems so I am going to dig that one out and put the soil air tubes in it. I don't have a plant in it this year.

I have grown AGs outside but the variability of the weather limits me to less than 700lbs. Too many thunderstorms, too much wind, too short of season. Our first frost date is just into the 2nd week of September.

You grew the heaviest watermelon and second heaviest field pumpkin in Canada in 2015. Can you tell us how you grow them? When do you start, plant out, plant size, fertilizer, watering, etc.

Watermelons need starting at the end of March. I have better luck when I have larger plants to set out. If they get set out by the end of April I will have a large plant by mid-June. I usually need to change the cold-frame to the 16 x 28' hoop-house close to the end of May. The plant will fill that by the end of July. I try to get a pollination by mid-June but early July still works.

Watermelons get the same soil treatment as the AGs. I amend with peat-moss and quite a bit of perlite. I am finally realizing the significance of nutrient antagonisms. I have made some micro nutrient additions this year that I hope help all my plants.

I add a corn-starch based mulch film to the melon patch to keep weeds down and soil temperatures up. I also switched to drip tape this year from soaker hoses. They work much better. I try not to get the melon patch too moist. Temperature is an issue with greenhouses but melons can take much more without dying. I have had a fan failure and didn't even notice. The greenhouse was sitting at more than 50° C but the plant looked ok. That would have killed an AG! I try to keep the temp to a max of 28° C. That is difficult for me to do during summer.

Field pumpkins get started mid-May and are placed outside shortly after. They get the cold-frame I have taken off the watermelon and AGs. Last year I added soil heat cables like my other plants get. It gave the plants a good head start. Field pumpkins seem to need a bit more moisture and a bit higher fertilizer levels than AGs. What causes vegetative growth in AGs seems to be about right for FPs. I added a high N lawn fertilizer to the patch last year and had a good season.

They are grown x-mas tree style, vines buried and pruned. Plants are large, about 25' wide by

25' long. You can grow more than one on a plant. I stagger pollinations by 10-15 days. That way peak growth doesn't overlap. Strangely, I have grown fruit very well on the first secondary vines. Last year I did it on purpose and grew a 140 and 158. Like usual, the main vine fruit were smaller, or split early.

158 Crews 15 (dmg)

The first year I used seeds with a champion background (81 Wolf, Thanks Andy!), I accidentally grew a 137 lb pumpkin. That was with practically no extra care at all. I thought I would grow some pumpkins for Halloween. Obviously our climate is good for field pumpkins. They seem to like it a little cooler. If we get one of those cool Augusts it is easy to get over 100 lbs, if it's warm they mature quickly and 100 lbs is a long shot.

During fruit growth I try to keep the soil very moist. If I hit the pollination just right they will hit the last part of their growth as it gets cooler. They seem to not be able to mature at the same rate if the daily highs are below 20°C. I often get 50 days of growth from late pollinations. A late pollination would be after July 20. A week either way may make the difference between 30 and 50 days of growth. There is a fair bit of luck involved with pollination timing and weather.

Quite a bit of my success would have to be attributed to a call I received from Fenton McInnis after I grew the 137. Among other things was the knowledge that they don't quit growing until long after they turn orange. I proved that with my 158 last year when it split while growing well while very orange. They still grow well when it's cool but that makes them prone to split as well. It's a fine line that I sadly cross all the time.

What do you have growing this year and how are they doing?

I have 2 AGs growing, a 2185 Brandt and one of my own 1213 Crews plants. 2185 fruit is pear shaped a bit so I have some concerns but the 1213 fruit looks good. As you might gather, the pollinations were early in June so by the time anyone reads this I might be well on my way to records or heartbreak. I have three main field pumpkins: my 140, 158 and a 133.5 Kapelari. The 133.5 was from my 145 and was grown here in Alberta.

2185 Brandt on day 25 (July 1)

There is a 179 Crews watermelon growing well. I have one pollinated but it looks shorter than I'd like. I also have some squash plants growing in the far garden but they are pure outside plants, and will not be able to set fruit until mid-July at best. I am growing a bunch of other field pumpkins there too, kind of genetics experiment so those will end up smaller than in

the competition patch. We also have a full veggie garden.

Most of us have never been to the weigh-off in Smoky Lake. Can you tell us something about it? Do you get a lot of interest?

Smoky Lake runs the weigh-off as part of the town fair. They pack a minor hockey arena full of people. The stage is at one end and the floor and the stands are full of people, many times, standing room only. I would guess there could be a couple thousand people. Winners are usually interviewed and many times we have found ourselves on television. It's close to the city of Edmonton so the major networks and newspapers have a good presence.

A packed arena at Smoky Lake pumpkin weigh-off

Thanks for sharing your time, especially in the busy, vine-burying period of the year!

Weigh-off information

Erin Fall Fair

October 7, 2016

ERIN AGRICULTURAL SOCIETY
SINCE 1850

www.ErinGiantPumpkinGrowers.weebly.com

GIANT PUMPKIN WEIGH OFF RULES

1. Judging will take place **Thursday, October 6th at 7PM** in the main show barn. Enter grounds from Centre Street.

2. **Unloading and registration starts at 5PM** and entries will be received up until 7PM. All pumpkins must be loaded on a pallet and situated in such a way to allow a forklift to easily unload on site.

3. One pumpkin per exhibitor.

4. A $30 registration fee per competitor allows entry into the Giant Pumpkin and Giant Vegetable classes.

5. GPC (Great Pumpkin Commonwealth) rules and judging will be followed. Complete rules can be found at www.greatpumpkincommonwealth.com

6. The winning pumpkin MUST be left at the fair for display or prize money will be forfeited. We will keep the next 5 largest pumpkins that growers are willing to leave for display on the wagon. All other pumpkins MUST be loaded and taken home that night. Pumpkins can be picked up on Monday, October 10th between 5PM & 6PM unless other arrangements have been made. There will be a secure, roped-off area provided for displaying the pumpkins.

GIANT VEGETABLE WEIGH OFF RULES

1. Rules 1, 2,4, and 5 of the Giant Pumpkin Weigh Off apply (weighing of these classes will start at 6PM)

2. **NEW THIS YEAR** there will be **four separate classes**. 1. Field Pumpkin, 2. Tomato, 3. Long Gourd, and 4. Other (each with its own prize money for 1st to 3rd) The "Other" class is open to the following vegetables that are judged by weight; Giant squash, cabbage, watermelon, cantaloupe, carrot, parsnip, beet (any

type), onion, marrow, bushel gourd, pear gourd, kohlrabi, swede/rutabaga. Entries must not have been judged at a previous event - no re-weighs.

3. Field Pumpkin, Tomato, and Other will be judged by weight, Long Gourd will be judged by length. To allow all types of vegetables to compete on an even basis in the "Other" class we have given a score of 100 points to various weights of each vegetable, Each vegetable will be weighed and given a score based on that weight with the highest SCORE being the winner (not necessarily the heaviest weight).

4. Judging rules for vegetables not covered by the GPC will follow the rules for judging from the EGVGA (European Giant Vegetable Growers Association) www.egvga.eu. Please go to www.ErinGiantPumpkinGrowers.weebly.com for information on how to prepare your entries for competition and the weight required for a score of 100 for each of the other giant vegetables.

5. Exhibitors may submit more than one TYPE of vegetable in the "Other" class (to receive an official weight) but only the one scoring the highest points will be eligible for prize money.

6. The grower is responsible for unloading, getting the entry to the scale, and loading of all vegetables in the Giant Vegetable Weigh Off. Please bring any items you require to help out as best you can, such as a wagon, tarp, blanket, extra help, etc.

PRIZE MONEY
GIANT PUMPKIN WEIGH-OFF

1st $1500 (+**$5000 BONUS** if eligible—see below) , 2nd $1000, 3rd $500, 4th $200, 5th $100, 6th $50, 7th-10th $25, 11th-20th $20
Trophies for top 20

PRIZE MONEY
GIANT VEGETABLE WEIGH-OFF

FIELD PUMPKIN- 1st $200, 2nd $100, 3rd $50
TOMATO- 1st $200, 2nd $100, 3rd $50
LONG GOURD- 1st $200, 2nd $100, 3rd $50
OTHER HEAVIEST- 1st $200, 2nd $100, 3rd $50
Trophies for top 3

*GPC plaques, rosettes, and other awards in addition to the above. For the most up to date rules and prize payouts go to: www.ErinGiantPumpkinGrowers.weebly.com

In addition to the prize money listed above, if a 2000 pound pumpkin is entered in the competition and wins they will be awarded a $5000 bonus. If this is a GVGO member from Canada that also wins the GVGO One Ton Challenge, they could receive up to $12000.

Wallaceburg
Kinsmen
September 24, 2016

The Wallaceburg Kinsmen are holding the weigh-off again this year. Everything ran pretty smooth last year, so we'll try and keep it the same.

September 24, 2016. **Registration is from 9:00 - 11:00 AM.** We would like to get all the pumpkins unloaded before 11 o'clock and start the weigh off at 11. This will be a GPC sanctioned event.

Prize money

Pumpkin - 1st $1500; 2nd $500; 3rd $175; 4th $125; 5th $100.
Long gourd - 1st $300; 2nd $100; 3rd $75.
Tomato - 1st $300; 2nd $100; 3rd $75.
Howard Dill Award - $50

If you have any questions email me: mdemars@kent.net.

Thanks, Zeke

PORT ELGIN
PUMPKINFEST
October 1st and 2nd

Port Elgin's Award Winning Pumpkinfest
IN THE MUNICIPALITY OF SAUGEEN SHORES

http://www.pumpkinfest.org/

Bracebridge

Fall Fair & Horse Show

September 16th-18th

http://www.bracebridgefair.com/

Hugli's Blueberry Ranch

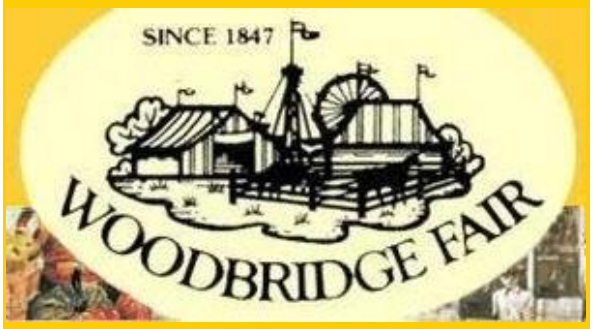
Pembroke

September 24th, 2016

http://blueberryranch.ca

Woodbridge Fair

October 10th, 2016



www.woodbridgefair.com/contests_exhibits_greatpumpkin.html

Prince Edward County Pumpkinfest

Wellington

October 15, 2016

This will be our 20th anniversary pumpkinfest!

http://www.pec.on.ca/pumpkinfest/

Pumpkin Mania

Belluz Farms, Slate River

September 24th, 2016

www.tbaypumpkins.com