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FEATURES

The Pot Method

New Projects

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January 2018 Newsletter

Welcome to the January edition of The Pumpkin Post.

Wherever you are hopefully you are coping with the heat. Summer has kicked off with some pretty hot weather all over the country.

I hope everything is going well with your pumpkin, whatever type you are growing. The summer months and growing random vegetables can be hard.

Especially if your water supply is from a tank.

With Christmas and New Years in the middle of the growing season how did you cope with the holidays?

I'd love to know what you

did, or any tips or tricks you may have for other growers.

I'm looking forward to the next 3 to 4 months while the pumpkins are growing.

Then it's time to see how everyone went at the pumpkin events around the country.

2017 was a great year for myself with my trip to Gisborne being the highlight of the 2017 pumpkin growing season.

2018 is shaping up to be an even better year and I look forward to seeing what everyone gets up to and sharing results, stories and more with you.



Facebook Pages

Make sure to check out the Facebook pages that matter to you on a regular basis. Be it growing clubs, gardening groups etc.

The reason I am bringing this up is that Facebook loves playing around with how it displays content. It seems they are trialling a new type

of feed, one where it will be very hard to see what a page posts.

They are in it for the money and want pages to pay to get their content seen. For a lot of pages out there this isn't an option. Make sure to support your local growers clubs, or pages of interest.

Let them know you like their content.



Everything is Relative

I know our population is tiny compared to the Northern Hemisphere growers, that is a fact. For such a small place New Zealand is producing amazing results, and so is Australia.



It's easy to see how different states in the US have their own pumpkin growing clubs. A lot of those clubs would dwarf the amount of "professional" growers we have here. Sometimes I start wondering what it would be like if giant pumpkin growing was the next big thing here in NZ.

People would be investing vast amounts of time, resources and money into growing. We'd have inter city competitions with the best of the best vying for the title of the best grower.

GPC Weigh off sites would appear around the country, giving growers a chance to become grower

of the year. Weighing 3 pumpkins at 3 different weigh-off sites would be possible.

Giant pumpkins would feature on morning TV shows, evening news and weekend broadcasts. Growers would share information on a national scale. As well as starting to take over the message boards on Big-Pumpkins.com.



But here we are. Growing through Christmas and New Years, with no pumpkins in October. Where Halloween is only celebrated by organisations that want us to spend money.

We only have a very small amount of proper pumpkin events around the country. A lot of smaller events comprise of fundraising for schools or other projects.

Getting small quantities of products to use on the patch can be hard. Soil tests are expensive and aren't set up for giant pumpkins.



And few people are keen on traveling long distances to get a pumpkin weighed.



Over time things will improve and more people will get growing, weights of pumpkins will increase, the biggest thing to remember is that it is that it is all relative.



The Pot Method

With any hobby or pastime there is always something to learn. From starting basic and growing upon it over time, giant pumpkin growing is no different.

It's always hard to cover everything people should be doing as a first time grower.

Vine burying is an important and essential aspect to helping get good results. The basics of vine burying is that at every leaf axis, a small root can form.

Burying as the plant grows gives you more chance for nutrient uptake and anchoring of the plant.



Growers have done this for such a long time, I'm not even sure of the origins of it. Recently there has been talk around using filled pots placed upside down on these leaf axis.

The most public people doing this would have to be Ian and Stewart Patton from the UK. They made a collection of small videos about their growing season and the pot method was in one of them. [Click here to view that video.](#)

The idea is that the pots provide a better percentage of the roots forming and going into the ground.



So is every grower out there now using this pot method? Well no, and the biggest barrier would be cost. Each plant grown needs somewhere between 500 - 800 pots placed and left on the plant.

Filled with media and drenched in water, they are then placed onto the leaf axis.



Tim Harris, current NZ record holder is using this method for the first time. Hoping to push his pumpkins further and get over the 2000lb mark. Something a lot of growers in the US have been able to achieve in recent times.



Protection for your Pumpkins

Pumpkin plants always need protection. First off they need our help from getting eaten from slugs and snails. After that it's usually the wind that can cause some major problems like snapped stems and broken leaves. If you make it past all that you reach the point in your pumpkins life where it needs protection from the sun.

If you haven't given your pumpkins any protection all is not lost, you can still help them out by providing shade.

Protecting the pumpkin skin from drying out and getting too hard, can

help stop splitting.



To provide some protection for your pumpkin, an old white sheet draped over the pumpkin can help. A tarp held up with poles will also provide much needed relief from the sun or a combination of both can work too.

You might also see some pumpkins

covered in blankets, this is to help keep the warmth from the daytime sun. Fluctuating temperatures can slow down growth so it makes sense to keep them warm at night.



Moving your Pumpkins

How are you going to move your pumpkin?

You are growing a giant pumpkin that you can't move by yourself aren't you? There are a couple of components to this question.

First how are you going to get the pumpkin from where it has grown to the vehicle that is going to take it to the weigh off?

And how are you going to get it from the vehicle at the weigh off to the



scales?

This all comes down to how big your pumpkin has grown. For little pumpkins you can get away with a wheelbarrow, a couple of strong people and a tarp or sheet.

Bigger pumpkins will need either a tractor, Hi Ab, or a tripod system built to lift the pumpkin up. A lifting ring is ideal for strapping pumpkins up to lift.

Most people will use a trailer to move their pumpkin around. Think about



soft foam padding for it to sit on, and more for one top, especially when strapping it down.



Check with your weigh off to see when you need to be there and where to go. If you have a big pumpkin, make sure to let them know in advance.

A lot of new weigh off sites underestimate the size of some of the pumpkins. Remember 789.5kg is the NZ record and you never know who can turn up on the day.

New Projects

Because I never seem to have enough things on the go, I've been working on some new projects. Sometimes you try to make things exactly perfect when in reality you should launch them.

So I am giving you a behind the scenes peak at what is coming very soon, to both help me pull finger and to get you excited.

Giant Veges NZ

www.giantvegесnz.com



Giant Veges NZ's aim is to record giant vegetable records from around NZ. We don't have a huge giant vegetable growing community like other parts of the world like the UK. Where they have big vegetable shows, and lots of competition.

But we do have some very passionate growers who I'm sure would want to strive to beat records if they knew what they were.

Giant Veges NZ will have a variety of vegetable world records listed, how to measure them

This will need themselves to submit the record and a lot of trust and honesty. But it is a start, and will give people

targets to grow towards.

In the future the website may have giant vegetable seeds for sale. And who knows there might be a giant vegetable weigh off at some point in the future. But slow and steady to begin with.

The Pumpkin Podcast

www.thepumpkinpodcast.com



THE PUMPKIN
PODCAST

Not too many of you will know, but I do a weekly podcast with my flatmate Chris. We've been doing it for over 160 episodes now and you can find the website here. I've now decided to make The Pumpkin Podcast.

This podcast will be an audio only format that is free to listen to, either via the website or your smartphone.

Podcasts are great as you can multitask as you are listening. Walking to driving to doing the dishes podcasts are a great way to hear new information when you want.

The aim of the podcast is to hear from pumpkin growers around the world. From growing tips to interesting stories I want to talk to growers from experts to begin-

ners. The requirements to be a guest are:

Have a story you want to tell related to giant pumpkins (or other giant vegetables)

Access to a computer with broadband internet

A headset with microphone

If this sounds like something you'd like to take part in, then please get in touch and we can work out the logistics.

More information about these projects will be coming out soon. I wanted to share these with you, the supporters of Giant Pumpkins NZ.

Weigh-Offs

A lot of people have downloaded their free copy of how to run a giant pumpkin competition from the website. You can get your [own copy here](#). Having a giant pumpkin competition is a great fundraising idea and fun for a group or community.



If you aren't up to the challenge of running your own event, how about being part of an existing event? Lots of events have all sorts of people involved.



It could be a great way to see how a local pumpkin event is being run

while giving back to the community.

Find giant pumpkin events in your area by checking out the [events page on the website](#). If you are running an event and would like it up on the website, please get in touch.



Cracks and Soft Spots on the Pumpkin

If you remember, shading of your pumpkin helps with the potential problem of the pumpkin splitting due to super fast growth. But what happens if you have small cracks on your pumpkin?

We'll think of these small cracks as stretch marks, they can appear if your pumpkin is getting rather large and not all pumpkins will get them.

The biggest concern with cracks is that they open up, stay damp and start rotting which can make it's way into the inside of the pumpkin.

Sometimes you may not even know your pumpkin is rotting and fermenting in the inside. When you do know, you won't forget the smell in a hurry.

Drying out these cracks is important, a good product to help with this is sulphur. Packing it into the crack will help it dry out, a small fan on the affected area will help too. If you have soft spots these can scooped out and the same treatment of sulphur applied.

The GPC rules around soft spots are:

4) The specimen must be sound, healthy, and undamaged. Entries must be free of rot, holes or cracks through to the cavity, and serious soft spots.

A) The Judges reserve the right to probe cracks, holes, and to dig out soft spots to judge a fruit official or not. Before the Judges can

execute any of the previous they must have the grower present.

B) A serious soft spot is one that is greater than 3 inches in diameter, and greater than 3 inches deep. The dimensions of the soft spot will be measured after all soft material has been removed with a spoon.

C) If there are more than two soft spots that require material to be removed and measured, the pumpkin will be disqualified even if each is smaller than the definition of "a serious soft spot".

D) Judging is to be completed before a fruit is officially weighed.



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The website for growing giant pumpkins in New Zealand.

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

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

Thanks for subscribing to the newsletter.

Next Issue Due Out - April 2018

Let me know what you would like to see in the next newsletter. And remember to check out the Facebook page and website for all the latest updates.

Advertise

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

Contact me via the details above to discuss options.

Write an article

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

