

Drew Papez

“I try to pollinate from 15'-20' out, because I feel the plant beyond the pumpkin contributes little to the size of the fruit. I water everyday to keep consistent moisture in the soil. This helps to thwart the ill effects of heavy rain and the possibility of a huge spike in growth. I fertilize once a week with water soluble fertilizer mixed with fish emulsion and seaweed extract. I also include water soluble micro nutrients along with epsom salts. I foliar spray calcium once every 5 days and I also spray this directly on the pumpkin.

“I use heating cables in the spring to warm the soil inside a 4' x 5' cold frame with ventilating lid. I am on a clay bed and once the roots hit the clay they grow horizontal. So, I have installed drainage tiles underneath the whole garden, spaced 3' apart running lengthwise, connected to a storm drain. The patch was built on top of the drainage pipes to a depth of 3' with potting soil, leaves, and manure, and I add more every fall. I built a retaining wall around my patch to hold the soil in place, and I feel this helps warm up the soil in the spring.

“My organic level is 20 percent and my pH is 7.1, but I concentrate more on the calcium to magnesium ratio. I spread *Ironite* every spring, along with 100 pounds of agricultural gypsum, and 6 yards of manure for my 800 sq. ft. patch. I also spread granular *Merit* in the spring to control cucumber beetles and squash bugs. I will be using *Warrior T* this year to better control squash vine borers. I also add another 100 pounds of gypsum each fall.



I only pollinate on the main vine and I pinch off all females on secondaries before they open. I try to pollinate 3 on the main and then choose the best one. I cull fruit at 50 pounds, just to make sure the best fruit is in it for the long haul. Usually the second fruit is the keeper, since the first fruit pollinated has always grown slower for me. This is how I learned to pollinate only the ones that are at least 15' out. I pollinate from June 28th to July 5th.

“My pumpkins average 400 pounds by August 1st, and I have to limit fertilizer after that. I had one split on August 4th at 700 pounds, pollinated June 28th. Daily measurements are required to be able to tell you whether you need to fertilize or not. At 30-35 pounds a day, I fertilize lightly. At 40 pounds a day, I do not fertilize. My 1020 grew 45 pounds a day for 4 consecutive days in

2001. Anything that I have ever had that grew over 50 pounds a day blew-up on me, so I like to see 35 pounds a day as a peak.

“I grow in a Christmas tree style, with no vines behind the stump. I let them first couple of secondaries grow to 10'-12', and as the main grows, the secondaries get progressively smaller. At the end of the main, I let my secondaries get to about 2' before I stop all growth on July 20th. I let my main grow 25', but I only have about 50 sq. ft. of plant beyond the pumpkin.

“I feel, the plant beyond the pumpkin contributes little to fruit growth, so I keep the plant size in this area to a minimum. I plant seedlings at either end of the garden and let them grow towards each other, allowing each only 400 sq. ft. of area.”



2001, 1020