



Name/City, State: Steve Geddes, Boscawen, NH

**1: How many years have you been growing giants and how did you get into the hobby?**

I've been growing since 2008. A friend/coworker who was part of the NHGPGA had tried to convince me for years to grow and finally dropped a plant off in my office in June of 2008 and that is all that it took to get me hooked.

**2: What is your personal best and any other notable records/accomplishments?**

My personal best is 2528 from this past year (2018). I did have the W.R. for all of 24 hours in 2012 with my 1843.5 that was weighed at Deerfield. Ron's 2009 that he weighed the next day at Topsfield became the new W.R.

**3: Why do you grow pumpkins and what goal(s) do you seek to achieve?**

I've always enjoyed gardening/farming and worked on a commercial produce farm during my younger years. I'm also a bit competitive and have always enjoyed any problem solving task so growing giant pumpkins is a great fit.

**4: What factors most significantly contributed to your success this year?**

Long periods of above avg. temps were likely the biggest contributing factor to my growing the 2528. I usually start seeing night time temps begin dropping into the mid 50's and lower from the middle of August on. When this happens I also see the daily weight gains start to plummet. This year our night time temps stayed above 60 all the way until mid-September. I use very few products or amendments and the only one that I added to my daily fertilizing schedule this year was a product that is sold by the name "Origin 360". The product is an animal based protein fertilizer and I used it mainly for the amino acids that it provides. The NPK in these products, think fish fertilizer, is actually quite low but they are a great source of getting amino acids into the soil.

**5: What is the biggest mistake you've made in this hobby and how has it changed your practices?**

Back in 2014 the farm supply store that I had been purchasing my fertilizer from for the previous 4 years stopped carrying what I had been using. They began carrying a custom blend which they promised me was the same (macro + micro % and rations) as what I had been using. After comparing labels I had to agree that they were pretty much a match. I had always struggled to get really healthy green plants but by mid-July my plants were just not thriving and I could not get a pumpkin to set. By mid-August I threw in the towel and called it quits. For the rest of the season, I spent a lot of time trying to determine what the problem was. And then, in one of those aha moments, I decided to more closely compare the ingredients of the previous fertilizer, with the one I just started to use. What I found was that the new fertilizer ingredients matched everything from the old with the exception that the new fertilizer had zero molybdenum. The fertilizer I had been using contained such a small amount of molybdenum that I really did not think this could be causing the problems that I had that summer. After doing a lot of reading on molybdenum's role in plant growth and what happens if it is not available to plants (very rare in most U.S. soils) I decided it would make sense to test my soil for it. Most soil tests do not include molybdenum testing in their standard tests so I had to ask for it to be tested for. The test results showed that my soil was almost completely deficient of molybdenum. I have since gone over to a fertilizer that does contain trace elements of Molybdenum, as well as adding it (micro amounts) to my fertilizing program. A lot of growers would likely have called that year a disaster and failure but I see it as one of my best years because it forced me to discover a problem that had existed for a long time, and a solution to it.

**6: What advice do you have for growers seeking to increase their success in the patch?**

I always tell growers to set their goal as the W.R. Once they do that they can back plan and determine what are the variables and factors that are keeping them from reaching that goal. From there decide on which factors you can reasonably or financially control. I also suggest to never hesitate to reach out for advice, but I also advise to always question and research any advice that is given.

**7: What are 3-4 seeds on your shortlist for next season?**

I will probably not start thinking about what I will be growing until sometime in March.

**8: Name three products/tools/practices that most significantly contribute to your success in the patch:**

I think it is a mistake to try to narrow down products/tools/practices to a top three. There are many, many steps/tools/products that are used from the start (seed germination) to the end (when the pumpkin is going on the scale). When I'm germinating seeds the potting soil, germination box, thermostats etc. are all critical things at that time. When I'm getting plants into the garden and it is still in the 30's at night but during the day in their hoop houses the temps can get over 100 if they are not ventilated then controlling those factors becomes critical. When vine pruning begins my very small/sharp scissors becomes important. You can see this list can go on and on so my point is that every practice, and tool or product used in that practice, should be viewed as critical.

**Bonus content from Steve:** Since almost all questions asked by other growers or clubs that are trying to get an article into a newsletter usually focus on what special technique or product you might be using I thought I might go over some of the things that I don't do that most other growers think are necessary.

-When germinating seeds I neither file or soak and have not done so for the past 8 years. I have a large germination box that I keep at a steady 90 degrees and keep my potting soil quite moist. Cots are almost always breaking the ground in 60-72 hours.

-I do not use walking boards other than inside the small 5 x 10 hoop houses early in the season. I use them in there since I have buried heat cables in the soil and cannot loosen the soil as the plant grows out without chancing damaging a cable.

-I do not use mycorrhizae or Azos. I use nothing when burying vines.

-I do not foliar feed.

-I do not tissue test. I do soil test in the fall and spring.

-I use town chlorinated water direct from the tap. No pre-warming in tanks.

90% of my watering is by hand and done under the canopy. On extremely hot days I do a lot of hand misting and some overhead watering.