
EDWIN PIERPONT 2019

Season in Review

As usual for myself and most competitive growers. The pumpkin season blends from one right into the next. So, 2019 began the day after the 2018 weigh off. I get a sample sent out to Western Labs for analysis. In the meantime, I rototill 3-5 yards of cow manure, and two yards of compost in the soil per plot. When I get my analysis back, I follow their recommendations and rototill the fertilizers in as well.

In the spring, I send out another test to see if there's any amendments still to be made. I start each of my seedings out in a 12x13 hoop house to help them get a jump on spring. It has been impossible for me to get pollinations as early as I'd like. The late and cold spring really sets back my plants progress. These last few seasons I've had

late pollinations. I'd prefer to have a fruit pollinated by mid-June, to the third week of June. But unfortunately, my two best pumpkins were pollinated on July first and second. As usual for me, I never had a day with gains more than 40lbs. But the gains were steady until we were dealt colder nights. By late August, I was (in my opinion) on pace for a subpar season. For I know based on my previous years of records, the good growth ends in August. And this year was no different. The September numbers were ho-hum. I typically have a few growers during the season asking how things are going, and what do I have going on the vines. And I gave them the honest answer. I told them I had nothing special probably a top three fruit if I was lucky. This summer I purchased a drawl scale because both of my fruit were similar in size. And it's a good thing I did buy it. Because I would have weighed the wrong fruit for competition based on dimension. As I lifted the fruit, I was shocked to see that I had two fruit weighing in over 1800 lbs. Especially since the largest estimated to be 1600lbs. Every fruit that I grew for competition went

heavy. I attribute this to the fact that this season I was on a structured spray and drench feed program. The only time I missed a scheduled date was for weather. But even then, I would either feed a day early or a day late. Week to week I maintained the feed schedule. I use a combination of growth products liquid ferts, as well as foliar feedings with neptunes fish and seaweed. In late July and early August, I

began using fungicide and neem oil to fend off powdery mildew. I usually look back on the season and wonder if I could have somehow done things better. And I do believe I have room for improvement. One, I hope this spring is better leading to an earlier pollination. And two, I believe I may have been under watering the plants. I use drip tape. And I have used the same tape for too long. The tape was getting plugged and not emitting as well as it should have been. I

believe I have seeds capable of doing well in 2020. I'm excited to begin another season. I truly believe there are several growers in Maine that can grow a one-ton fruit. But everything is going to need to be ideal to pull it off. The right seed, growing techniques, early pollination and luck will get us to one ton. I really think within the next five years it will take a 1800lber to make top five. Who knows, maybe just maybe the one-ton mark in Maine can be eclipsed with a squash seed first. I will be trying very hard to do just that with my 126.5. Good luck to all the growers out there in 2020. And always remember to never give up on a fruit. There were several times this season when I felt like giving up my foliar and drench program because based on previous records, I was not on par to be able where I wanted at this season. But you never know what is going on inside those fruit until it's scaled.



Figure 1 Edwin Pierpont With His Maine State Record