Steve Daletas and his 2469 Q&A

Steve is an amazing grower from the Oregon, who has consistently placed with the top growers world wide. He was #2 in the world this year. He is a World Record Holder with his 1385, back in 2003, and a GPC HOF member. The Following is an in depth interview. Let's start with last year...

Steve: What was done for Fall/Spring prep? amendments, cover crop, tilling etc. My fall prep for the last several years has been to clean the patch of vines, test the pH, apply lime as necessary to bring the pH up, plant a cover crop of rye grain and walk away. The last two years I have brought in roughly 1 ½ yards of a mint straw compost per 1000 square feet. Other than that, I have really backed off bringing in large amounts of amendments.

What was the pollination date of the 2469? The 2469 was pollinated on June 16. Our goal when we started the season was to pollinate one week earlier than we had done in the past, we succeeded on that goal.

Do you bury vines, if so, what do you add to your vine bury mix? Yes, I bury both the main and the secondaries. Under each leaf node I bury a mix consisting of 4 parts WOW Mycos, 2 parts Rootshield, 1 part Actino Iron, 1 part Kelp meal, and ½ part WOW Azos.

Did you have to reposition the 2469 as it grew to relieve vine/stem stress? Funny you should ask. Every pumpkin in the patch got moved August 1st to relieve stem stress. As luck would have it the last pumpkin we moved, which happened to be the largest in the patch refused to move until our fourth try. The sound of a pumpkin stem snapping off the vine is one I won't forget for a while. So I probably needed to make a few more pumpkin repositions in August/September. But decided to just reposition and support the main vines instead.

When you pollinated the pumpkin, how many side vines before the pumpkin were already terminated? I had 3 secondaries each side of the Main Vine terminated by June 16th. The entire plant was fully terminated by September 7th, with the exception of three secondaries I let them grow until we picked the pumpkin mid-October.

Do you max out Boron? I did amend the soil preseason to 3ppm. But I say that with a word of caution. I dissolve and stir in boron in 4 gallons of hot water, and use my mist blower to spray a light mist over the entire patch. Trying to spread boron any other way, especially at the high end, I would be worried about some areas receiving to much boron and creating a toxicity problem that could take out your plant.

How do you shield your pumpkin from the sun and do you do anything special to keep the stem dry? Fortunately for us, come about July 4th, the rain stops and doesn’t return until late September/early October. I use a bed sheet, day and night, from pollination date on. Comforters placed over the sheets become the norm, by mid-August through the end of the season as our nights are rarely above the low to mid 50’s. If I’m on the road the comforters are left on day and night. If I’m home I will remove the comforters during the day. The stems get treated weekly with a light Zerotol sprayer starting mid-July through the end of the season. I also use a small fan 24/7 on each stem until we pick the pumpkin in October. And if its going to rain, I place 10x10 tarps, zip tied to two pvc pipes over each pumpkin Do you water overhead, Drip or by hand and how often? Great question! I water once per day and use drip tape as my primary means of watering with over-