

## Lesson #54

### A Giant in the Garden

Short, tall, wide, skinny: pumpkins come in all sizes, shapes, and shades. This is good because every pumpkin buyer is looking for something unique. The Great Pumpkin Commonwealth in California holds a yearly contest to find the world's largest pumpkin. In 2013, Tim Mathison entered the contest and broke a world record. He became the Grower of the Year by producing a giant that weighed 2,032 pounds!



Growing pumpkins is a hobby that Tim shares with his daughter, Tara. They spend up to four hours a day taking care of the pumpkin patch. Tim uses seaweed to enrich the soil. He also uses garlic to keep insects off the growing plants. Sometimes, he even puts a tent and a space heater in the pumpkin patch. This is how Tim keeps his young plants warm at night.

It took 105 days to grow Tim's award-winning pumpkin. He knows he was lucky. And, he thinks the weather in Napa Valley, California was especially good for growing pumpkins in 2013. Tim had two other prize-winning pumpkins that year. The total weight of all three was nearly three tons! Tim won about \$50,000 in prize money, plus a trip to New York City. Even the pumpkin came along. It became part of a special Halloween display in New York!

There are many secrets to growing a pumpkin giant. Growers start with special seeds from a pumpkin called the Atlantic Giant. Its seeds are as large as peach pits. In the spring, each seed is planted in rich soil. Growers are careful to keep the soil moist but not soggy. Pumpkin plants like warm temperatures with plenty of sunlight. One trick is to bury the vine so the plant will grow more roots and bigger pumpkins. Once the fruit appears, each pumpkin can gain as much as 30 pounds a day. But, once they are cut from the vine, these giants begin to lose six to eight pounds a day.

Local fairs and garden centers around the country hold pumpkin contests every year. If you'd like to be a grower, look for contest details and prepare your soil. It could be the start of something...BIG.

- RI.3.2 1. What is the passage mainly about?
- A) Napa Valley is the only place to grow giant pumpkins.
  - B) The Atlantic Giant is a type of giant pumpkin.
  - C) Growing giant pumpkins takes hard work and a little bit of luck.
  - D) People love pumpkins of all sizes.
- RI.3.1 2. What is the Great Pumpkin Commonwealth?
- A) a group that holds a yearly contest
  - B) a region in California
  - C) the largest pumpkin ever grown
- RI.3.1 3. How does Tim keep his young plants warm at night?
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- CCRA.R.1 4. How does Tim enrich his soil and keep insects away? Underline evidence in the text.
- RI.3.3 5. A *cause* tells why something happens. The *effect* is what happens. A grower will bury a vine so \_\_\_\_\_.
- A) weeds will not grow in the pumpkin patch
  - B) plants grow more roots and bigger pumpkins
  - C) pumpkins begin to lose weight
  - D) plants like the rich soil
- RI.3.4 6. What is the meaning of the underlined word? This is good because every pumpkin buyer is looking for something unique.
- A) bright orange
  - B) very large
  - C) award-winning
  - D) unlike any other
- RI.3.1 7. Underline three ways to describe the prize-winning pumpkin of 2013.
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|-----------------------|-----------------------|----------------------|
| weighed 2,032 pounds  | grew in New York City | broke a world record |
| weighed nearly 3 tons | grew for 105 days     | grew in a greenhouse |
- RI.3.1 8. Once the pumpkin is cut from the vine, it \_\_\_\_\_.
- A) ripens
  - B) gains weight
  - C) grows deeper roots
  - D) loses weight