



Volunteer Growers Alert:



It's time to prepare your pumpkin patch for next year's growing season!

I like to start the week after harvest. Most successful growers have developed a plan that works for them, but will generally agree on a few basic necessities. Below is a list of steps I like to do in the order they are listed.

1. Remove all roots and vines from last year's plant to help prevent spread of plant disease. This is a great time to look at root and vine condition. The length and size of the roots can tell you a lot about the quality of your soil.
2. Analyze your soil by digging into it at different locations for inspection and samples for a good soil test. How deep can you easily dig with your bare hand. (6" will work but 12" is better)
3. Add nutrients, compost, PH adjustment material, and sand or gypsum for clay soil as needed. A good soil test can help but, unless you thought ahead, the results can take weeks at best.
4. Till your garden as deep as possible for good root growth. (This is one area that the expense of a powerful tractor with a tiller that goes 8" or more is wise.) Now is the time to plant a winter cover crop. I like winter rye this time of year because it will continue to grow in the spring and holds your nutrients until you till it in as your pumpkin plant grows.
5. Let your patch rest and absorb the amendments you have added. After a couple of good rainy days, and before April, do another soil test. You will still have time for adjustments.
6. Fall is also a good time to lay out your future plant and greenhouse location. If you use hoop houses as I do you can install the hoops.
7. The most important advice I can give is to communicate with other experienced growers! We are fortunate to have a large number of successful proven pumpkin growers in Maine, and I have always found everyone very helpful! GOOD LUCK!!

Richard Powell
2015 second place winner with 1548# Atlantic Giant Pumpkin

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