What’s new?
How many men does it take to lift a pumpkin?
Quite a few if it’s the largest pumpkin in Tennessee for the 2007 season! George Kopsell, of Wildwood, TN, grew the 1,065-pound pumpkin that took First Place this year at the Tennessee State Fair. He narrowly missed the Tennessee State Giant Pumpkin Record of 1,078 pounds held by our own Wendel Smith, the Lawrence Co. Extension Agent. Wendel’s largest pumpkin this year tipped the scale at 709 pounds, taking 4th place. Kopsell’s second largest pumpkin weighed in at 859 pounds, and got him the 3rd place ribbon.

Though this was his first attempt at growing pumpkins in Tennessee, George is no stranger to growing giant pumpkins. He had been growing ‘Atlantic Giant’ for years, and even held the Illinois State Giant Pumpkin Record back in 1998. Besides its girth, one of the things that makes Kopsell most proud of his giant pumpkin is the vibrant orange color and the smooth skin. Often, the giant pumpkins are peach colored and have ‘netted’ skin similar to a cantaloupe.

Speaking of melons, large pumpkins aren’t the only giants at the State Fair. The Burcham family, of Pleasant View, TN, claimed four of the top five biggest watermelons at the fair this year, with the heaviest weighing 214 pounds. Now that’s a melon!

If you’d like to see the giant pumpkins or watermelons, they will all be on display at the Tennessee State Fair in Nashville until September 16.

Wendell Berry and Joel Salatin at the SSAWG Conference January 16-19, 2008
The Southern Sustainable Agriculture Working Group’s annual Practical Tools and Solutions for Sustaining Family Farms Conference program is already shaping up to be a blockbuster! Joel Salatin of Polyface Farms, featured in The Omnivore’s Dilemma, will give the keynote address at the Taste of Kentucky dinner Saturday evening, and will lead two conference sessions—one on his multi-species grazing and one on his marketing strategies.

Plus, in a unique event with Wendell Berry, his readers will have the opportunity to participate in a structured conversation with him that will take place on Thursday evening. Mr. Berry, the renowned essayist, poet, author of novels and short stories, and farmer, will talk about why he and the rest of the sustainable agriculture community have taken on this necessary work, how does he see sustainability in the larger cultural picture, what gives him hope, and what sustains his love for farming.

This article was taken from the SSAWG August Newsletter. For more information on the upcoming SSAWG Conference, see the ‘Upcoming Events’ on page 3 or visit: http://www.ssawg.org/Newsletters/SSAWGnewsAug2007.html.
Question of the Week

Q: A lady called me and has about 2 lbs of ginseng she just recently harvested. She wants to know what it is worth. She has been offered $20/oz. Where is the best place to sell it? She also has some seed that are red. Are they mature when they turn red? Can she save the seed and replant? I know nothing about ginseng. Help! -J.G.

A: First, for others who may not be familiar with ginseng, let’s talk a little bit about the plant. Dr. Jeanine Davis, from NCSU, wrote ‘Ginseng: A Production Guide for North Carolina’ (http://www.ces.ncsu.edu/depts/hort/hill/pdf/ag-323.pdf), which is a great publication for those interested in cultivating ginseng and goes into much more detail than we have space for here. But back to the plant… She describes American ginseng (Panax quinquefolium L.) as a shade-requiring, herbaceous plant native to the hardwood forests of eastern North America. Its fleshy root and short underground stem are perennial. The leaves and stems die at the end of the growing season and regrow each spring. Ginseng is valued by people in many nations who believe it has health-promoting properties, Davis says. The root of American ginseng has been collected for export to the Orient since early in the 18th century. Now, to get back to your questions. The price and where to sell it depend on whether it is wild or cultivated ginseng. Wild ginseng is a highly regulated crop, due to its relatively slow reproductive capabilities and nearly constant human harvest pressure. The TN regulations for harvesting and selling wild ginseng can be found at: www.state.tn.us/environment/na/nginseng.shtml. Buyers and sellers BEWARE as violations are punishable by fines of up to $500.00 and forfeiture of illegally obtained ginseng. This website also explains the history of the regulations, the harvest season and differences between wild and cultivated ginseng. The berries are mature when they turn red, and recommendations for replanting and conservation can be found on both of the websites that I have previously mentioned.

Crop Report

Pumpkin, squash, and tomato harvests continue. Pumpkins are generally of good quality this year. Downy mildew pressure increases with the rains in Middle and West TN. Powdery mildew pressure continues across the state. Be on the lookout for plants dying back and sunscald on the fruit. Sunscald can reduce fruit color quality and also cause handle discoloration. Remove any fruit in danger of scalding out of the field. Ornamental corn harvests are well underway, as well as the bundling of the shocks. The Fall decorations will be on every doorstep soon. Many agritourism operations are gearing up for a busy season. Hay rides, corn mazes, pick-your-own pumpkin...

Weather Report

This week, Eastern Tennessee hopes to catch up with Middle and West Tennessee as far as seeing some rain goes. Chances for rain in Knoxville are good for the beginning on the week and begin to decrease mid-week, but will return by week’s end. Temperatures will also start to seem more September-like. Daytime highs will be in the mid-80’s early in the week and drop to the low 80’s late in the week. Lows will start the week in the low 70’s and continue to decrease throughout the week, possibly dipping into the mid-50’s by next weekend. Good chances for rain continue in Middle Tennessee this week, with high and low temperatures mirroring those in East Tennessee. West Tennessee will also continue to see some rain, with slightly cooler temperatures than some other parts in the state. Highs in the early part of the week will be in the low 80’s, creeping into the mid-80’s by mid-week, then dropping back down into the 70’s by the end of the week. Lows will start in the upper 60’s and continue to drop throughout the week, into the 50’s by the weekend.
Upcoming Events

Haygrove “Grower to Grower” Tunnel Tour, October 5, 2007, Dayton, VA
The best way to shorten your learning curve is to see season extension for yourself and learn from people who have “been there, done that”. Growers will share a wealth of real world, practical knowledge at this meeting. For details, visit: www.tunnelbuzz.com/us.html.

Produce Marketing Association Fresh Summit, October 12-15, 2007, Houston, TX
For more information, visit: www.pma.com/freshsummit.

Sunbelt Ag Expo- 30th Anniversary Show, October 16-18, 2007, Moultrie, GA
For more information visit www.sunbeltexpo.com or call 229.983.1968.

Deep South Fruit & Vegetable Conference & Trade Show, December 5-6, 2007, Mobile, AL
For more information, contact John Braswell (phone 601.403.8939, email braswell@ext.msstate.edu) or visit: www.deepsouthfruitveg.com.

National Potato Council Seed Seminar, December 6-8, 2007, Branson, MO
The National Potato Council will hold its annual seed seminar at the Chateau on the Lake in Branson, Mo. For more information, contact Hollee Alexander at hollee@nationalpotatocouncil.org or (202) 682-9456.

International Irrigation Show, December 9-11, 2007, San Diego, CA
For details, call 703.536.7080 or visit http://www.irrigation.org.

Tennessee Fruit and Vegetable Association Convention, December 9-11, 2007, Nashville Airport Marriott, Nashville, TN

22nd Annual Southeast Vegetable and Fruit Expo, December 12-13, 2007, Myrtle Beach, SC
Contact Cathy Price at 919.334.0099 or fax 919.877.0940 or visit: www.ncvga.com for more information.

Application of Precision Agriculture for Fruits & Vegetables, January 6-9, 2008, Orlando, FL
The event will be held at the Grosvenor Resort in downtown Disney World. For more information, including a list of discussion topics, visit http://www.precisionag2008.com or e-mail info@precisionag2008.com.

Southeast Regional Fruit and Vegetable Conference, January 10-13, 2008, Savannah, GA
For more information, contact Rebecca Smith (phone 877.994.3842, email rsmith@gsinfo.net) or visit: www.gfvega.org.

For more information, visit the SSAWG website: http://www.sawwg.org/.

Conference details will be made available in the next few months and will be posted on the Center for Profitable Agriculture’s Web site at http://cpa.utk.edu.

World Ag Expo, February 12-14, 2008, Tulare, CA
For more information, visit http://www.worldagexpo.com/.

Winter Vegetable Conference and NC Tomato Growers Meeting, February 21-22, 2008, Asheville, NC
For more information, contact Jeanine Davis at 828.684.3562 or jeanine_davis@ncsu.edu.

SPROUTS: Supporting Producers through Research and Outreach at UT
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