

# How I Grew my 112.2 lb Canadian Record Cabbage

By John Vincent

Even before I started growing giant veggies, I had identified that my soil grew excellent Cole crops. The first year we had this property, I planted a range of these including red and white cabbage, broccoli, cauliflower and brussels sprouts. They turned out excellent! At that time, I really wasn't sure why, but later I discovered that my high pH, clay soil is ideal for these crops. Later, as I started growing giant veggies, my giant Cole veggies flourished as well.



*112.2 lb Canadian Record Cabbage at the Royal Winter Fair in Toronto.*

I started growing giant cabbage, at first growing the Northern Giant variety and later Cornish Giant. I felt that the Cornish giant had a larger denser head, where most of the weight was, making it the ideal variety for record weights. I remember having many discussions with good, large cabbage growers such as Harry Willemse and John Butler. Both gave me insight into feeding these monsters.

Each year as many growers do, I try to observe and learn from my last growing season and improve on my growing techniques for the next season. A few observations I made in the past was that the lower leaves tend to decay, especially where they remain wet and touch the ground. I also observed that when I harvested these giants, the ground was always powder dry underneath the canopy. I had heard growers talk about making feeding devices to direct water and plant food under the canopy, but other than directly pouring my liquids under the canopy, I had never tried any more aggressive methods.

For the 2012 season, I took inspiration from Phil Joynson's cabbage structure I saw on the 2011 patch tour. Phil built a platform designed to keep the lower leaves off the ground with air circulating beneath. This not only reduced the amount of decay of these lower leaves, but also allowed for easier placement of water and nutrient's under the canopy.



*Racking system helps to keep leaves off the ground, makes it easier to water and feed, as well as makes it much easier to transport and reduce damage at harvest.*

I've always had difficulty starting plants indoors in the winter as I don't have a window with a good southern exposure. I was lucky enough to receive four plants from other growers at the GVGO seminar in April. Two were from Lonnie Bourne, and two were from Bryan Mailey. All four plants were from the same seed source, Dave Thomas (Cornish Giant on the GVGO message board). Bryan's plants were started in early January and Lonnie's were started in mid-February. All four were very healthy and I transplanted up to 1.5 gal pots prior to setting out.

I constructed my platforms, 4ft square with 8" square holes in the center. They are covered with ½" square hardware cloth, and sit on 6" legs. I prepared the planting sites similar to my pumpkin sites with similar amendments. I created mounds peaked up to the holes in the platforms. The plants were then transplanted into these holes, so that the leaves would lay on top of the mesh. I used straw mulch around the structures, to help hold moisture and reduce weeds.

Each cabbage was fitted with its own feeding system consisting of a 5 gal pail mounted on a wooden stand. Each pail was fitted with a bulk head fitting, allowing a length of weeper hose to be attached. Under each Cabbage , I spiraled 25 feet of weeper hose. This makes about 3 good circles around each cabbage. The point of these is to allow for consistent even watering under the canopy of each cabbage.



*Pail and weeper hose feeding system supplies water and nutrient's under the canopy*

Consistent watering is the key to keep these cabbages growing as well as preventing splitting.

Overhead watering was done on the same schedule as the giant pumpkins, with additional water added under the canopy as needed to keep the soil constantly moist. One to two teaspoons of 20-20-20 water soluble fertilizer per plant was added to the pail water on a weekly basis. Although this is discouraged with other giant veggies, it does work well on cabbage as they don't colonize mychorriza.

The spray program was the same as the pumpkins. Pesticide/ foliar fertilizers were applied every 10 days with a power mist blower, which I believe is important for proper canopy penetration. Matador insecticide and a rotation of Nova and Headline fungicides were applied. Also (ACT) compost tea was applied through the overhead watering system on a weekly basis. Actinovate and Serenade Max biological fungicides were applied in a rotation with the compost tea, always applied 2-3 days after a chemical fungicide. My theory is to re-inoculate the plant with good microbes. Other foliar nutrients applied on a regular basis, included Cal-Carb, Neptune's seaweed and a couple applications of foliar manganese.

The Thanksgiving weekend I harvested my first cabbage of the season for exhibition at the Woodbridge Fall Fair. The cabbage weighed in at 99.0 lbs, setting a new Canadian record. I came home from Woodbridge fair and constructed a hoop house over my two remaining large cabbages, with a small heater inside. This ran at first only at night, but later in October 24/7 to maintain a warm consistent temperature .



*99.0 lb cabbage at Woodbridge Fall fair October 6<sup>th</sup>, 2012*

The second cabbage was weighed at PEC Pumpkinfest in Wellington at 96.5 lbs. The third was weighed in at the Royal Winter fair at 112.2 lbs, setting another Canadian Record. The current World Record is held by Scott Robb in Alaska at 138.5 lbs. Be sure I have some great ideas for next year and have the WR in my sights!