



Spring 2020

GPC Common Ground

A PUBLICATION DEDICATED TO GROWERS WORLD-WIDE WHO CULTIVATE GIANT FRUITS AND VEGETABLES

VIVA LAS VEGAS! 2020 INTERNATIONAL GROWERS' CONVENTION

By: Cindy Tobeck

Giant produce growers from all over the world converged upon Las Vegas, Nevada February 28th through March 1st, 2020 for the annual Great Pumpkin Commonwealth International Growers' Convention. Many arrived a day or two early to explore the

nearby Lake Mead National Recreation Area, and hills including Red Rock Canyon, and Fire Valley State Park, as well as the colossal casinos of the Las Vegas Strip, or the lights and sights of historic Fremont Street.

On Friday afternoon, growers were greeted by the friendly faces of the GPC committee at the registration tables, given their name tags, swag bags, convention t-shirts, and raffle tickets for Sunday's seed raffles. Later that evening, everyone wore pink and met on the rooftop patio for drinks and conversation for "Flamingo Friday".



2020 IGC



The Flamingo Hotel was host to the 2020 IGC.

The 2020 GPC committee members who planned the IGC at Friday's Flamingo Friday in their 'matchy-matchy' pink flamingo shirts.

VIVA LAS VEGAS 2020 CONTINUED...



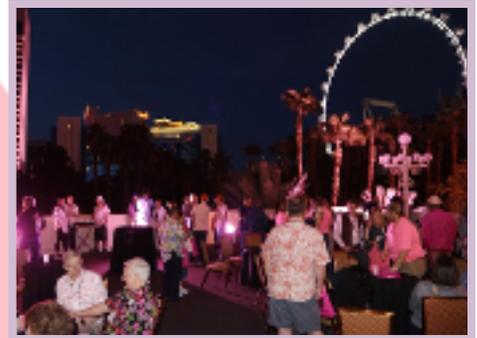
I got to meet a lot of great people Friday night and had some fascinating conversations! Living in Washington state, I admit that I know very little about watermelon; I had the pleasure of speaking with a couple of the top melon growers in the world: Nick McCaslin and Frank Mudd. Both hailing from the bluegrass country of Kentucky, they live in an environment perfect for cultivating giant watermelons. Both men grow their melons on scales,

and attest that when they spray chemical controls, the fruit actually LOSE weight! That definitely makes me wonder if the same holds true for the giant pumpkins and squash. Another thing I learned from each was that every watermelon fruit will grow daily at an EXACT same time....like Old Faithful! Nick was telling me that daily at 4:00 PM his melon would gain weight. Frank Mudd has each of his melon scales



logging data with a wifi computer connection and he has documented how all of his melons make their gains like clockwork. It makes me want to try putting a pumpkin on a scale all season long to see if the growth patterns are similar.

The friendly Utah growers were in attendance and most of them I spoke with live in the vicinity of Salt Lake City. They were trying to talk me into bringing a pumpkin down to their Thanksgiving Point weigh off....and I'm seriously thinking about it for 2020!



Saturday morning, the conference room was opened up and everyone got to see the beautiful display of awards. as well as the seed lineup for the raffles! The awards were stunning: medals for all of the past and current inductees to

the prestigious GPC Hall of Fame; glass replica trophies sitting atop mini pallets for the various fruit category winners, high-gloss engraved plaques for various sites and individuals, medals for growers, and of course the patches and jackets for the giant pumpkin and squash growers who succeeded in achieving various milestones.



VIVA LAS VEGAS 2020 CONTINUED...



There was an excellent turnout, with over 160 people in attendance for Saturday's educational sessions. The first presentation was by Joe Jutras, who was the 2019 Master Gardener, garnering the most points for his huge field pumpkin, long gourd, tomato, bushel gourd, squash and giant pumpkin. Joe had a fantastic winning season despite having issues the previous year with root aphids, necessitating the purchase of new loam for his patch. He showed how he built a new 20'x40' caterpillar-style greenhouse. Joe gave tips about how he created a jig to help him perfectly position his soil heating cables. Being a Master

Gardener involved a great deal of planning, and Joe had to perfectly coordinate not only his planting sites, but also his starting dates for his various seeds.

Besides his new loam, Joe also added to his repertoire Co₂, with the goal of maintaining a morning level of 1200ppm.

It was interesting to note that Joe grew two plants back-to-back in his greenhouse and that he started seeds on April 3rd. They were germinated by April 8th and planted out as soon as their first true leaves were present. The greenhouse was taken down by the first week in June. Do you want to know what Joe puts in his vine burying mix? He uses bone meal, Azos, Root Shield and WOW michorhizae.

New for him last season was using ground cloth to suppress weeds over his 6-foot pathways between plants. The ground cloth was also used over the main vine to promote the darkness the the roots like. Also, he stopped a pervasive disease that had previously plagued his long gourds by thoroughly spraying his trellis with a water/bleach solution then hitting it with a copper fungicide spray; it worked perfectly, and his long gourds grew without issue!

Elijah Meck, the GPC southern representative, gave another talk on spraying pesticides that elaborated on his previous discussion at the 2019 Green Bay Big Show.

He asserted the importance for growers to identify the pest or disease correctly so that one can manage it right away. Ways to do this is through vigilant scouting in the patch, and utilizing online pest alerts for a grower's region.

Elijah discussed some of the more common maladies of curcubits including the pests squash bugs, squash vine borers, aphids, cucumber beetles, white flies and spider mites. Additionally, he showed examples of powdery mildew and downy mildew.

Once growers can identify the insect or disease plaguing their plant, he suggested utilizing local university crop guides for spray recommendations. These typically can be found online and offer a great deal of information including specific product names. Another useful online tool are regional disease forecasting tools, such as the Cucubit Downy Mildew Forecasting tool www.cdm.ipmpipe.org.

Elijah reiterated the importance of reading product labels so that growers can protect their plants, their pocketbooks, the environment, themselves and others.

Do you want to look up a product label before you buy it to learn more about it? Do you have a bottle of chemical with a missing or torn label? Here is a website Elijah shared to look up chemical labels: csms.net/label-database or you can try: agriam.com/labelcenter



VIVA LAS VEGAS 2020 CONTINUED...



Alex Noel, a top grower from Connecticut, presented next about his incredible 2019 season. Alex has been growing for 17 years off and on, and had a real breakout year, harvesting a 2294.5 pounder, as well as a 2058.5 monster.

He was hoping to have a good season, knowing in 2020 he was going to have to take at least a year off, however things got off to a very rocky start for him. The rain was relentless in the spring and he was unable to get an early soil test or do any patch prep whatsoever until he started his seeds on April 12th.

Alex filed then soaked his seeds in hydrogen peroxide then sowed them into ten 2-gallon pots that were placed into a styrofoam-insulated germination chamber. The seedlings then went under sodium lights which he prefers over fluorescents as they provide some warmth.

Meanwhile in the patch, Alex subsoiled with a 28" shank and prepared small coldframes with a 100-watt light for heat and covered those with blankets.

His 1st seedling, the 1938 Sperry, (which subsequently grew his 2058.5) looked SAD. He also had procured a backup 2114 Wallace plant from Ron Wallace that was in a 2-gallon pot. It was a lovely plant, but he was somewhat skeptical how well it would do since it was in the pot for an entire month before being planted out!

Looking at Alex's patch photos, his soil looks DRY. His philosophy is in the beginning, before the fruit sink, not to water too often because he feels "it's best to treat the plants like athletes, not pigs; let them work, and send deep roots out." Once the fruit is set, he waters liberally.

Some of Alex's fertilizers for the seedlings were half-strength 12-12-12, Origin 360, Neptune's Fish, WOW Brew, WOW Kelp, and WOW Humic/Fulvic. He watered only every 5 days and used these.

Eventually, Alex was able to build his screenhouse over his patch just in time for the smaller coldframes to come off, then it was time to prune. So many people use the "Christmas tree" style, but not Alex. He uses what he referred to as a "diamond pattern", whereby the seedling is planted in the corner of the patch, and grown diagonally. Because the plant has limited space for the first few secondary vines, and these get pruned back to short lengths early, Alex feels that this benefits the plant in a couple of ways. First, it makes the main vine more aggressive, next he claims it promotes female blossoms in abundance, as it "scares" the plant into reproduction.

As far as trench mix, Alex likes to use WOW michorhizae and Root Shield.

By June 10th, he contends that he had only watered the plant 10 TIMES TOTAL! Some of us were wondering with all of the rain he had experienced in the spring if that had raised the water table...who knows.

Once pollinated, he erects plywood over the young fruit, never contact shades, such as a sheet because he doesn't want anything marring the baby's tender skin. As the plant grows out, he really feels that the vines closest to the fruit are the most important and will always keep the secondary vine at the fruit and grow tertiaries off of it in a flag pattern to fill in space.

As the season rolled on, he switched to dark colored sheets to generate heat in the fruit.

The rest, as they say is history. Alex Noel grew the 2nd and 16th biggest pumpkins in the world, earning him his jacket and 2200 pound patch!



VIVA LAS VEGAS 2020 CONTINUED...



After a WONDERFUL lunch buffet, we had a real treat! Pork Chop and Lamb Chop, aka Steve and Jeanne Marley, who grew the world record 9.65 pound tomato Skyped in from New York!

They put together a fun presentation outlining their quest for the elusive 10-pound tomato. The Marley's assert that the tomato variety to get to 10 pounds is the Domingo. As far as soil prep goes, he didn't waste time 'preaching to the choir', since giant pumpkin growers already know how to get good soil. However, he did reveal that in each planting mound he put in

some Azos, WOW Michorihzzae, as well as WOW Super Starter Packs.

Steve likes deep planting holes because he knows those tomato roots can extend at least 10-feet out. After cultivating the area, he digs down 20-inches deep and wide, puts soil conditioner in the bottom along with premium potting mix, then mounds up the soil. Each tomato is spaced 5-feet apart. Steve says, "Dig a \$100 hole for a \$5 plant and you will never have to worry about it again!" He did admit to adding a little extra fertilizer pre planting

Steve lives in Zone 4, and planted out with a single stake the 1st week of May, but says depending on where you live, that's about the same time one would be cutting the lawn for the 3rd time.

Come mid-July, he started feeding the plants weekly. Some of his products of choice were Seaweed, compost tea, Uncle Dunkel's, Epsom salts, and Essentials. He continued with these weekly all season long.

What is the #1 secret to growing the world's biggest tomato? Steve says it's not to overwater it; that is the WORST mistake you can make with the Domingos. Overwatering and uneven watering is also the number one cause of the dreaded blossom end rot he believes.

Once the plants started to take off, they brought in 3 yards of compost to raise up the soil level and give the roots more room to roam.

Soon, he started using Uncle Dunkel's as a foliar spray to get the plants to start flowering. Steve contends that blossom selection can be tricky, and he prefers blossoms with 2-3 fused sections; 'Wilson', the world record tomato, was a triple blossom. He has noticed that the petals seem to "pop off" the good ones. Also, it is important to keep only 2-3 MAXIMUM fruit per plant. When pollinating, he likes to keep it simple and let the bees do it, with an occasional assist by thumping on the tomato stake.

As far as pruning, Steve had a great picture of Wilson, stripped of all leaves, to illustrate his method of allowing a main vine and 4 strong secondaries with the main terminated at the fruit.

Thanks Steve, for helping the other tomato growers to 'ketchup' in their own quests for 10 pounds!



VIVA LAS VEGAS 2020 CONTINUED...



Andy Corbin and Jack LaRue, both GPC Committee members, briefly presented about all of the work they have put into the GPC website (www.gpc1.org) as well as the huge database of statistical information available to growers. What's new? OTT calculators for Atlantic Giants/Squash, Watermelon, and Field Pumpkins! Very soon, the Bushel Gourd OTT calculator will be online too! Also, growers will find the new master gardener rules and stats, stats and MORE STATS under the "Jack's Stats" tab at the bottom of the webpage.



Following Jack and Andy, Steve Connolly presented on bushel gourds and how they are on the verge of hitting 400 pounds.

Steve outlined his 2019 season, starting with hand-digging 20" down to remove the large, pervasive rocks common on his property. Then he added 20 yards of 2-year-aged chicken manure as well as 2-year-aged leaf compost. He further amended with kelp meal, seafood compost, crab and lobster shell, Origin 360 and Neptune's Harvest Fish Fertilizer.

Next, as he started the seeds indoors and had them sitting under his T5 lights, he further readied the patch by adding soil heating cables and building 10x8' hoop houses. Regarding the heating cables, Steve noted that since the Bushel Gourd is a native to the tropics, they will not grow if the soil is cooler than 75 degrees, so he sets his thermostat to 75.5 and uses warm water to irrigate. To further promote growth with warmth, Steve placed temporary mini quonset huts inside of the 8x10' hoop enclosures..

He also used WOW mycorrhizae and WOW Starter Packs.

One thing that Steve does that is different from most other Bushel Gourd growers is he prunes the plant exactly like a giant pumpkin plant, using the traditional 'Christmas Tree' pattern. Additionally, he buries the vines, however he noted they don't root heavily, and on Bushel Gourds the primary source of energy is their stump.

Next to present were Ian and Stuart Paton who created a fantastic video of their 2019 season.....with a charming little background song that went on....and on....and on.....and on.....until by the 240th time, those of us in attendance had it droning in our heads for the rest of the weekend. But seriously, it was a great video and showed how they double-dig their VERY light, fluffy and DEEP potting-soil like dirt within their HUGE greenhouse.

They still swear by their 'Paton Pot Method' to promote deep roots at each leaf node. I had a chance to speak with Ian Friday night about the pots, and have a much better understanding of their philosophy behind the practice. The Patons are commercial poinsettia growers, and they have noticed that when potting poinsettias, the roots respond differently to black pots versus terra cotta colored pots. The opaque black pots promote root growth, whereas in the more translucent terra cotta's the roots shy away from the sides, especially if there is a nearby light source. This realization prompted them to start putting drenched soil into nursery pots and placing them at each leaf node instead of burying the vines.



VIVA LAS VEGAS 2020 CONTINUED...



The results are quite remarkable: more roots than I have ever seen from both the tops and bottoms of the leaf nodes! The saturated dark pots make a real difference for the Patons. For those of us who grow outdoors and deal with wind, the pots may be challenging, but I already have some good ideas that will promote the darkness and wet conditions the roots need to thrive based on the Paton's innovation.

The Paton's are driven to grow a world record in 2020 and vow to work harder than they ever have to achieve that. Good luck guys!

Next, we had a group photo out on lawn near the Flamingo Aviary Garden before we had a break before dinner and the awards banquet:



The Flamingo Hotel fed us VERY well and it was another great time to mingle with fellow growers before the evening festivities.



VIVA LAS VEGAS 2020 CONTINUED...



2020 Great Pumpkin Commonwealth Hall of Fame

By: Cindy Tobeck

2020 marked big changes for the GPC's greatest honor, induction into the Hall of Fame. For the last two years, the GPC board has been working on revising the process with the goal of having it grass-roots driven, whereby candidates are recommended by their peers within their various regions.

HOF candidates must meet at least three of the four criteria:

1. Leadership at the site or GPC level for 5+ years, with a high degree of integrity, ethical conduct and selflessness.
2. Generosity of time, seeds and knowledge
3. Five awards+ won in GPC sanctioned events
4. Ten years+ growing experience

There were several nominees, but four clearly stood out as exemplars among their peers:

Jim Sherwood, Mulino, Oregon
John Barlow, Gays Mills, Wisconsin
Frank Mudd, Vine Grove, Kentucky
Ian & Stuart Paton, Lymington, England

GPC board member, Todd Kline heads up the Hall of Fame committee, and introduced the new criteria. Because the committee was still working on the nomination process, and seeking input from vested HOF members, there were no inductions at the 2019 Big Show, therefore in 2020 the committee opted to elect multiple candidates and to encourage growers from regions not previously represented to nominate their peers.

Todd Kline introduces the Hall of Fame Saturday night.



2020 Great Pumpkin Commonwealth Hall of Fame

Mr. Jim Sherwood

Jim Sherwood's first year growing was in 2000 resulting in a pumpkin of 730 lbs. weighed at the GPC Hoffman's Dairy Farm site. He has won at least 6 GPC sanctioned events - Terminator 2008, Seaside 2010, Bauman's 2016, Terminator 2016, Skagit 2017, and Terminator again in 2019.

He has participated in over 50 GPC sanctioned weigh offs traveling an average of 3,000 miles each year to support the GPC and its affiliated clubs. He has grown & entered at least 71 pumpkins and squash at GPC sites since 2005. He ranks third with the total number of entries. His entries combined weight totals 93,881 pounds.

Jim has been and is Master of Ceremonies for all Pacific Giant Vegetable Growers (PGVG) weigh offs from 2004 to present. He is a charter member and co-founder of the PGVG, aiding in setting up the club bylaws and leadership structure. He was the co-creator of the inaugural PGVG newsletter in 2002. He was the editor from 2002- 2010 working with page layouts, content, interviews and articles. He also produced the first color club newsletter. Jim was the PGVG President from 2006 - 2010 and Secretary from 2002 - 2007; under his tenure the PGVG obtained GPC status. He helped organize and conducted meetings, seminars, seed sales, tours and picnics.

He was also the PGVG Site Coordinator from 2004 - present for Bauman's and "The Terminator" which has grown to over 20 thousand spectators.

Jim additionally held the office of GPC Treasurer from 2010-2016 and transformed this office with better accounting practices, structure and accountability enabling the GPC to gain sponsorships while keeping the balance on the plus side of the ledger for his entire tenure.

He also served as the GPC Western Region Representative from 2007 - 2016 and was directly responsible for establishing 10 new GPC sanctioned weigh-offs in California, Oregon, Washington, Hawaii, and Japan.

In 10 years on the GPC committee he was involved with rule revisions, new site development, logistics for growers in his region to travel with pumpkins to the New York Botanical Garden event, website, implementing BP spread sheet, and expanding the GPC worldwide.

Jim has donated 1,000's of seeds to help support all clubs and growers who have asked.

He has given many hours and miles mentoring growers by phone and instructing them at their homes. He is a strong supporter of his local weigh-offs his club and the GPC.

Jim further served as the GPC Conference Awards show emcee from 2012-2017 and aided in development and presentation of the "GPC Big Show".

Jim has been part of numerous TV, magazine, radio and newspaper interviews promoting our awesome sport.

He has attended all but 2 GPC growers' seminars since 2006. He has also been part of the pumpkin at sea seminars.

Jim has worked very hard for all of us. For the last 19 years Jim has been part of this community, and has given us 9 years of service on the GPC board. He has given 18 years of service to his club and its members. He has traveled from Oregon to Japan, all the while promoting the GPC and giant pumpkins. Congratulations, Jim and thank you for your service.

Excerpts from Jim Sherwood's bio presented by Jack LaRue, Eddy Z., and Dave Stelts

2020 Great Pumpkin Commonwealth Hall of Fame

Jim Sherwood Continued...



2020 Great Pumpkin Commonwealth Hall of Fame

Mr. Frank Mudd

Frank Mudd began growing the giants in the year 2000 when his wife Mary Jo talked him into planting some giant pumpkin and watermelon seeds that she bought through a mail order catalog. Frank had long gardened potatoes, beans and corn and he made room in his garden that first year for two pumpkin plants and two watermelon plants. Those plants thrived under Frank's care and he watched in fascination as both pumpkin plants produced pumpkins that grew very rapidly, only to be heartbroken, when one of the pumpkin split at 450 pounds. The other pumpkin grew to 751 pounds. He entered that pumpkin in his first weigh-off at the Indiana giant pumpkin growers club and came in 2nd. His watermelon plants grew two melons at a very respectable 110 pounds each. Frank was hooked! He dropped the potatoes, beans and corn and started researching on how to do a better job of growing the giants.

The research paid off as Frank's second year results improved again by producing melons that came in at the 150 to 160 pound range and successfully growing pumpkins that were entered into the Indiana and Tennessee state fairs. As Frank's results improved other growers took notice and began to use him as a resource for information when he grew the first pumpkin over 1000 pounds in Kentucky and in the south in 2006. With a collegial leadership style Frank has served as the President of the Kentucky Pumpkin Growers Association for the last 14 years and the Master of Ceremony at both Bear Wallow and Robert's Family Farm for that time frame as well.

By his own initiative, four years ago, Frank began teaching a how-to-grow giant watermelons seminar with the cooperation of his local Meade County extension agent to anyone in the county that was interested. Frank's reputation as grower and folksy speaker has annually drawn 30 to 40 people who come in for the class. As word of the seminar spread, interest has come from beyond his county and Frank has welcomed it. One such interested individual from outside Frank's county last year was Nick McCaslin. Nick attended the seminar and asked for Frank's council as he grew his first giant watermelons and pumpkin this year. With Frank's mentorship and a robust work ethic, Nick McCaslin produced a 324, 258, 244 pound melons and a 1045.5 pound pumpkin as a first year grower.

Frank will take a call from any grower and give them his best ideas on how to obtain better results. His study and thinking about the issues commonly problematic to melon growers has produced the technique of getting the watermelons off the ground 6 to 8 inches with a wooden frame that sandwiches minnow seine to allow for airflow under the melon. The inspiration for the melon hammock came after Frank lost a 280 pound watermelon to bottom rot (and too many other big melons). Frank freely shared this insight and many growers in the watermelon community now employ this technique to eliminate rot on the bottom of their melons. Evidence of Frank's influence can be noted at weigh-offs when large melons are entered and they have prominent striping on the bottom of the melon signaling that even the bottom of the melon received enough light to produce striping all the way around.

2020 Great Pumpkin Commonwealth Hall of Fame

Frank Mudd Continued...

As each new growing technique produced even bigger melons, Frank has dug deeper to unlock insights and techniques into growing the giants. More recently in the last 3 years Frank has grown his melons on a scale and with the help of instrumentation and wi-fi he has tracked every input (temp, humidity, ferts, water, weather, etc.) with the help of a computer program developed by his son and another grower to produce a chart that updates every hour on how the melon is growing. He can literally watch the graph of his melons growing from his computer screen. Key takeaways from this activity shows that ANY melon plant will react negatively to any extraneous input for about 24 hours. The plants are exquisitely sensitive.

He also has data to establish that each individual plant will be in growing modes at different times of the day. One plant might grow from 8am to 4pm and another one in the same greenhouse will grow from 7pm to 7am. Each plant is consistent throughout its life cycle. The insights gleaned from the database drives Frank further as he believes a 400 pound watermelon is not that far off and a 500 pound melon will happen someday. He feels that growing techniques still have much room to improve. Though he hopes that he can break the world record and can retire, in the meantime he is more than willing to share information to help take the sport as far as it can go.

I asked Frank what surprised him the most about the hobby and he opined that he never dreamed the hobby would go worldwide. He currently receives and honors seed requests from all over the world from growers and clubs alike. He estimates that he sends out 800 to 1000 melon seeds annually and as far away as Australia, Poland, Germany, England, Spain, Italy and France. While Frank has grown melons exclusively for the last 7 years he grew his largest pumpkin in 2011 weighing in at 1146.5 pounds at Bear Wallow. His achievements with pumpkins include: Winning the pumpkin weigh off at the Indiana State Fair 3 separate times (non GPC at the time). Winning the Tennessee State Fair pumpkin weigh off 3 separate times (non GPC). Franks 14 first place GPC wins in melons date back to 2012, the last year of data I can access on Big Pumpkins.com. They include:

2012 274.5 pound melon at the Indiana S.F

256.5 pound melon at Roberts Family Farm

2013 290 pound melon at Roberts family Farm

2014 253 pound melon at Roberts Family Farm

219.5 melon at the Indiana State Fair

2015 250.5 pound melon at Operation Pumpkin (Hamilton, Ohio)

232.5 pound melon at Roberts Family Farm

2016 305 pound melon at Roberts Family Farm

Excerpts from Frank Mudd's bio presented by Elijah Meck

2020 Great Pumpkin Commonwealth Hall of Fame

Frank Mudd Continued...



2020 Great Pumpkin Commonwealth Hall of Fame

Mr. John Barlow

John Barlow has been growing Giant Pumpkins since 1989. In 1998 he entered his first pumpkin at Anamosa, Iowa and have not missed a year since.

John has served the community in various ways including: President, Wisconsin Giant Pumpkin Growers 5 years; Board of Directors, Wisconsin Giant Pumpkin Growers 2 years; Seed Distribution Coordinator, WGPG 2 years; Newsletter Editor / Developer, WGPG 2 years; Website Designer / Maintainer, WGPG 5 years; Seed Auctions, WGPG with Rick Jolivette and Mike Schmidt 5 years.

Further, John has supported and assisted GPC Site Coordination at the Kenosha Weigh-Off, with Jim Ford 3 years; Cedarburg Weigh-Off, with Garry Gantner 2 years; Cedarburg Weigh-Off, with Del and Julie Faust 3 years; Green Bay Weigh-Off, with Jeremiah Plansky 2 years; Altoona Weigh-Off, with Mike Golat and Shannon Engel 1 year; Madison Weigh-Off, with Rick Jolivette 2 years; Lake Geneva Weigh-Off, with Glen and Margaret Martin 2 years; and the Wisconsin Dells Weigh-Off, with Glen and Margaret Martin 1 year.

John has been an example of generosity of time, seeds and knowledge writing numerous articles including: 'The Pinwheel Flag' Vine Pattern; 'Out of the Darkness There is Life'; 'How to Grow Giant Pumpkins'; 'Pumpkin Plant Growth Zones'; 'Pumpkin Plant Stages'; 'Water Zone Parameters'; 'Water Zones', as well as multiple WGPG newsletter updates. In addition to his article submissions, John has written a booklet titled, 'Beginners Guide', which is a free downloadable pdf booklet found at: www.wisconsinpumpkingrowers.com.

John also has created several Power Points: 'How to Grow Giant Pumpkins' presentations where he has presented at various venues including: 4 years at the Madison Garden Expo; 2 years at the Paradigm Gardens; 2 years at the Fennimore Grower's Club; 5 years at the WGPG Seminars and Meetings; 1 year at the UW Richland; 2014 Hydroponic Project; 1 year at the Madison Garden Expo; 'Growing Giant Pumpkins - Jeopardy' one year at the Wisconsin Dells Seminar; 'WGPG Who We Are' and 'Typical Weigh-Off' presented one year at the [wisconsinpumpkingrowers.com](http://www.wisconsinpumpkingrowers.com) website.

Additionally, John has created the Videos: 'Growing Giant Pumpkins - Year in Review' for 4 years for the Madison Garden Expo & WGPG Seminars.

If that wasn't enough already, John has worked really hard on his club website, designing, developing, and maintaining [wisconsinpumpkingrowers.com](http://www.wisconsinpumpkingrowers.com)

John has donated countless seeds to Anamosa. Since online auctions, seeds are donated without discretion to clubs around the world. The WGPG has a seed distribution program and receives the majority of the seeds he donates. He also has organized 5 Spring Seminars, 6 Winter Meetings and 6 Patch Tours.

John Barlow has amassed an impressive list of awards in his career including the 2015 and 2018 titles of Master Gardener; Ten Central Region Championships for Giant Pumpkins, Long Gourds, Watermelons, Tomatoes, Squash and Bushel Gourds. Additionally, he has won an impressive eleven giant pumpkin weigh offs at seven different venues.. John's most memorable highlight accomplishments include: Six Time Wisconsin State Champion Giant Pumpkin Grower; New York Botanical Gardens Trip in 2018; Seven Time Top 25 GPC Pumpkin Listing; Anamosa Hall of Fame Inductee; Wisconsin State Record Giant Pumpkin; and currently holds 4 State Records for watermelon, pumpkin, squash and bushel gourd.

Excerpts from John Barlow's bio presented by Pete Caspers

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John Barlow, Continued...



2020 Great Pumpkin Commonwealth Hall of Fame

Mr. Ian and Mr. Stuart Paton

The GPC has laid out four sets of criteria as guidelines for nomination into the Hall of Fame. A grower must meet at least 75% to be considered for induction. Ian and Stuart Paton not only meet, but have excelled in not just three, but all four categories.

The first criteria states:*The grower must have taken a leadership role for 5 or more years at the club level, as a GPC site coordinator, Executive Committee Member, or held a similar role. It goes on to say the nominee must also have demonstrated a high level of integrity, selflessness and ethical conduct throughout their history.*

In 2007 Ian and Stuart, in an effort to help get European growers achievements recognized, paid for and hosted their first GPC sanctioned weighoff. They have continued to do so as GPC site coordinators to this day.

In early 2008, Ian joined the GPC board as the European representative and held that position until 2017 when he was elected president of the GPC, a position he held until 2018.

The Paton's had a dream of one day hosting a GPC seminar in Europe and floated the idea to the GPC board in 2014. If you know Ian and Stuart, when they set their sights on something, it will be achieved. Two years later, they, with the help of their mum, their families and their friends not only welcomed us into their country, they welcomed us into their place of business, into their homes, their lives, and of course their favorite pub. It was a BIG SHOW that all who were fortunate enough to attend will never forget, and one that holds a very special place in my wife's and my heart.

The second criteria for consideration states:*The grower must have given generously of their time, seeds and knowledge for the betterment of this hobby, including public speaking, seed donations and volunteering.*

Let's start with Seeds. If you see an auction without Paton seeds in it, it's most likely because the club didn't ask. They are as generous, down to their last seed as anyone I know of in the hobby. Public speaking: I think today's presentation speaks for its self. I know for myself, I always learn something when they speak. Knowledge: In 2006, Ron Wallace broke the world record for his second time. He sat down with Steve Connolly at season's end and together they chronicled Ron's season from start to finish, then put it on DVDs that they made available to growers worldwide. They also put together a PowerPoint presentation explaining in detail what Ron did that ultimately culminated in the first 1500 pound pumpkin ever grown. Ron was not only the guest speaker at that year's GPC seminar but also shared his presentation at many local clubs seminars, including the Northwest club that I belong to. I still remember Ron coming over to me at the first intermission and asking how he was doing. I chuckled as I showed him my two pages of single spaced notes. My response to his question.....you just gave away the blueprint on how to not only compete with, but possibly beat arguably one of the best growers of all time. He smiled and said, "I would want it no other way." Ian and Stuart are no different, they followed Ron's lead and in typical Paton fashion, they took it to the next level. They put together 18 You Tube videos which they titled, "Giant Pumpkin Wars" that are a must watch, these videos showed their every step, from soil prep and seed starting, to the picking and weighing of their pumpkins. They also have kept a diary on BP.com for many years once again showing their techniques, successes and even their failures. Ask these two a question and you will get an answer. They have always said, "We have nothing to hide."

2020 Great Pumpkin Commonwealth Hall of Fame

Ian and Stuart Paton, continued...

These are not just words to them, but the way they feel it should be done. The hobby is in a better place because of their approach.

Time: They hosted the first and only BIG Show ever, that was not held on North American soil. Two boys, a dream and seemingly limitless time and energy is what it took to pull this off. Once again, unselfishly giving of themselves for the betterment of the pumpkin community.

Innovation: I remember several long conversations with Ian and Stuart after I gave my first Water presentation at a GPC seminar held here in Las Vegas several years ago. The very last question they asked me was, "how many soil probes do you use"? My answer was 8. I was not surprised a bit when I heard that they installed 12. The Paton pot system, Double-digging. Moisture monitoring, I could go on and on; they are always pushing the envelope, learning and ultimately sharing their findings with the world. They would have it no other way.

The third criteria to be considered for induction states, *The Grower must have won 5 local/regional GPC sanctioned events, with a bonus for regional & world records.*

In 2006, Ian and Stuart broke the British record with an 819# pumpkin. Since then their weights have soared. They have weighed pumpkins in the UK, Holland, France and Spain. Over the span of the last five years they have entered 12 contest, winning 8 of them. They have placed 2nd, 3rd, 3rd and 6th in the Grower of the Year standings over the last four years. It's only a matter of time before they achieve their ultimate goals of GOTY and the setting of a new World Record.

The fourth criteria states, *The applicant must have been an active grower for at least 10 years documented by entries at GPC weigh-off sites.*

Ian and Stuart started growing pumpkins at age 13 and never stopped. But it wasn't until the early 2000's and several long phone calls with the late Howard Dill that they became hooked. They weighed their first pumpkin with the GPC in 2007 and have continued to do so to this day.

Here are a couple of interesting facts: Ian and Stuart have grown 5 of the 15 largest pumpkins on the planet over the last 4 years. They are the only growers in the world who have weighed 8 pumpkins over 2000 pounds. And the average weight of their winning pumpkins is an amazing 2285 pounds.

And lastly, The 5th criteria: The GPC only list four criteria for induction, but in my book there is one more. I don't have a fancy name or description for it. But if you know Ian and Stuart you understand. Ian and Stuart love life, they love people, and they obviously have a passion for growing pumpkins. But, they also understand that pumpkins are a means to something so much more important than achieving a goal or setting a record. Pumpkins are the common denominator that has brought us all together tonight, that has taken us to places in the world we might not have gone, and given us friendships that will last a lifetime. Ian and Stuart get it. Yes, pumpkins are amazing, but what I'm most impressed with about these two is they understand that pumpkins are the tool that helps open the door to the world, not just to make a statement in the world.

With that said, it is my great honor and privilege to introduce to you, 2020 inductees to the GPC Hall of Fame. Ian and Stuart Paton.

Speech delivered for the Patons by Steve Daletas

2020 Great Pumpkin Commonwealth Hall of Fame

Ian and Stuart Paton, continued...



2020 Great Pumpkin Commonwealth Hall of Fame

Past inductees who were in attendance honored with medals:

Vested HOF members present at the 2020 convention were: (left to right) Dave Stelts, Steve Daletas, Joe Jutras, Steve Connolly and Jack LaRue.



Previous inductees honored the new 2020 class: (left to right) Stuart Paton, Ian Paton, Jim Sherwood, Frank Mudd and John Barlow.



The World's Top 3 Heaviest Bushel Gourds of 185 entries:

- 1. Kevin Marsh 369 pounds
- 2. Dustin Price 344 pounds
- 3. David Marvin 335 pounds



The World's Longest Gourds of 254 entries:

- 1. Goran Lazic 155,70 inches
- 2, Frank Ansems 153 inches
- 3, Joe Jutras 146.13 inches

The World's Heaviest Marrows of 125 entries:

- 1. Mark Baggs 198.2 pounds
- 2. Frank Ansems 163 pounds
- 3. Sebastian Suski 153.9 pounds

The World's Heaviest Tomatoes of 431 entries:

- 1. Steve and Jeanne Marley 9.65 pounds
- 2. Rick Spaziani 7.64 pounds
- 3. Larry Hill 7.18 pounds



The World's Heaviest Watermelon of 290 entries:

- 1. Andrew Vial 341.5 pounds
- 2. Frank Mudd 341 pounds
- 3. Nick McCaslin 324 pounds



The World's Heaviest Field Pumpkins of 300 entries:

- 1. Bradley Wursten 205 pounds
- 2. John Kapelari 191 pounds
- 3. Jef Treece 188 pounds

The World's Heaviest Squash of 197 Entries:

- 1. Joe Jutras 1935.5 pounds
- 2. Caleb Jacobus 1514 pounds
- 3. Fred Ansems 1352 pounds





4000 Pound Club out of 1735 sound Atlantic

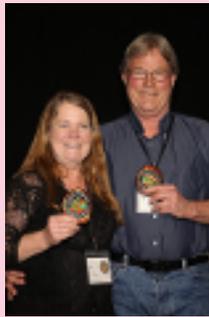
Giant Pumpkins:

Lorelee Zyweic, John Butler, Debbie Gantner, Shannon Leer, Daryl Tingley, Maureen Tingley, Gene LaRiviere, Chris Qualley, Dan Fleser, Chris Brown, Norm Kyle, Mikkal Hodge, Scott Marley



4500 Pound Club:

Dave and Carol Stelts, Salvador Mogas and Jose Maria Gonzales, Kevin Companion



2500 Pound Club

Karl Haist

Rookie of the Year:

Champion: Clint Dyson 1583.5 pounds

Reserve Champion: Don Anderson 1581 pounds



4800 Pound Club:

Joe Platte, Sheri Handy, Steve Handy, Jerry Rose, Jerry Rose III

5100 Pound Club

Cindy Tobeck



Regional Champions:

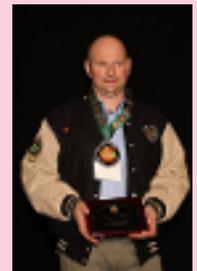
Asia: Takenori Shimizu 943.3 pounds

Southern Hemisphere: Alex Harris 1314 pounds

Canada: Phil and Jane Hunt 1814 pounds

Europe: Mario Van Geel 2241 pounds

USA: Karl Haist 2517 pounds



5400 Pound Club

Jan Biermans, Leonardo Urena, Ian and Stuart Paton



5700 Pound Club

Joe Jutras



6500 Pound Club

Karl Haist



2200 Pound Club

Mike Schmit, Karl Haist, Mario Van Geel, Alex Noel



Most Improved Site of 121 Sites Worldwide:

- 1. Irvine Park Railroad, CA + 45.95%
- 2. Campionato Dello Zocone, Italy +35.98%
- 3. Deer Field, NH + 34.025%



Best Top Ten Average

- 1. Topsfield, MA 1910.2 pounds
- 2. Frerichs Farm, RI 1888.3 pounds
- 3. Ohio Valley Giant Pumpkin Growers 1781.1 pounds



Heaviest 10 Fruit Weighed at One Site Average

- 1. Ohio Valley Giant Pumpkin Growers 2090.9 pounds
- 2. Safeway World Championship Pumpkin Weigh Off 2080.2 pounds
- 3. New England Giant Pumpkin Weigh Off 2074.6 pounds



Sites with the MOST Entries

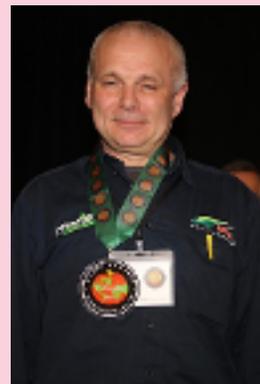
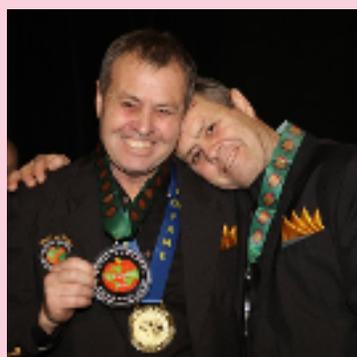
- 1. Riesenkuerbismeisterschaft, Germany 129 entries
- 2. Elk Grove, CA, 68 entries
- 3. Ohio Valley, OH, 66 entries





Top 25 Biggest Pumpkin Growers Overall

1. Karl Haist 2517 pounds!!!!
2. Alex Noel 2294.5 pounds
3. Mike Schmit 2261 pounds
4. Mario VanGeel 2241 pounds
5. Ian & Stuart Paton 2183.9 pounds
6. Ruben Mendi 2183.7 pounds
7. Leonard Urena 2175 pounds
8. Gary Vincent 2169.5 pounds
9. Luc Vanheuckelom 2164.9 pounds
10. Steve Geddes 2158 pounds
11. Don Barron 2118 pounds
12. Woody Lancaster 2116 pounds
13. Beni Meier 2094.4 pounds
14. Russ Klowan 2074.5 pounds
15. Dale Marshall 2051 pounds
16. Ruben Frias 2017 pounds
17. Herman Boonen 1997.4 pounds
18. Ron & Dick Wallace 1984.5 pounds
19. Joe Jutras 1965 pounds
20. Quinn Werner 1955 pounds
21. Steve Sperry 1936 pounds (tie)
21. Thomas Keenan 1936 pounds (tie)
23. Andy Wolf 1911.5 pounds
24. Jan Biermans 1899.3 pounds
25. Scott Steil 1891 pounds (tie)
25. John Harnica 1891 pounds (tie)





Master Gardener:

- 1. Joe Jutras 216 points
- 2. John Harnica 210 points
- 3. Gerard Ansems 207 points



Growers of the Year:

- 1. Karl Haist 6821 pounds
- 2. Joe Jutras 5827.5 pounds
- 3. Leonardo Urena 5655 pounds
- 4. Ian & Stuart Paton 5642.9 pounds
- 5. Quinn Werner 5618.5 pounds
- 6. Jan Biermans 5518.2 pounds
- 7. Ruben Mendi 5512.9 pounds
- 8. Ruben Frias 5369.5 pounds
- 9. Cindy Tobeck 5361 pounds
- 10. Jerry Rose and Jerry Rose III 5035 pounds



THE DIRT

THINGS DUG UP FROM
BIGPUMPKINS.COM



Early Tomato Reps

Please thank Jeff Reid for all his hard work making the Early Tomato Contests a success: Lots of hard work and dedication. Thank you and your family Jeff! Taking over for the GPC Early Tomato Event will be Pete Caspers and Jack LaRue. Their email addresses are already posted and we will have more details to follow.

I have talked with ICEMAN... and his 10 Lb TOMATO Challenge is ON... Start your engines..... Normalcy will prevail We WILL GROW past this.... Grow ON! Stay Safe, Stay Calm.... and Stay Home..in the garden...GROW BIG!

-Your GPC Committee

Big Orange Beauty Contest

Here's a bit of positive news: Long time SCGA member, former MN record holder, MN state fair winner, and all around generous grower Bill Foss has been working with the SCGA to launch the following program. Many thanks to Bill for getting this off the ground, not to mention his generosity with seeds and additional contributions. The 2020 Big, Beautiful, and Bright Orange Challenge is a monetary incentive structure designed to reward those who grow HD-award winning pumpkins around the globe.

All the details are captured in a blog post on the SCGA website. Hop on over to read more. Would love to have you participate and thank you for considering!

<https://www.stcroixgrowers.org/blogs/news/2020-big-beautiful-bright-orange-challenge>



Site Registrations are Coming Due!

Site Weigh Off Registration is May 1st. If you have involvement in setting up your weigh offs, please let your sites know we need registration by May 1st to meet our vendors need for creating and shipping. Last year we had zero late deliveries or missed sites, a GPC first. So this means our system is working well, but we need your help to make it happen again successfully this year especially.

<https://gpc1.org/weigh-off-locations/site-registration/>



Featured Grower Chat with Mike Schmit

Stop by the chat room on Friday April 3rd at 9:00 PM EST for a conversation with the 2019 Stillwater Champion, Mike Schmit of Wisconsin!

OVGPG Spring Seed Raffle

- | | |
|--|----------------|
| 1. 2517 Haist, 2005 Haist. | John Kaminski |
| + Western Labs soil test | |
| 2. 2416.5 Haist + Western Labs soil test | Gordon Robert |
| 3. 2469 Daletas + Western Labs soil test | Rick Jolivatte |
| 4. 2517 Haist + Western Labs soil test | Bob Liggett |
| 5. 1911 Urena + Western Labs soil test | Neil Freshorn |
| 6. 2416.5 Haist. | John Haluch |
| 7. 1911 Urena. | Rick Jolivatte |
| 8. 2517 Haist. | Rick Jolivatte |
| 9. 2255 Zaychkowsky. | Michael Alves |
| 10. 1937 Werner. | Rick Jolivatte |

Thanks for your support. -Quinn

Southern Growers' Meeting

-Susie Zuerner

The 2020 Southern Growers meeting was held February 15th at the Marriott Hotel in Winston Salem, NC. Growers from Kentucky, West Virginia, Virginia, Tennessee and North and South Carolina came to hear three terrific speakers on topics that make a difference to our growing efforts. Dr. David Hardy, Section Chief – NCSA&CS Agronomic Division Soil spoke for an hour about soil fertility, nutrient uptake and testing. All of the growers benefitted from hearing his presentation. To the watermelon growers delight we heard from Dr. Richard Hassell who is a Professor of Vegetable Physiology at Clemson University and a co-developer of a new disease resistant watermelon rootstock. The rootstock which took 12 years to develop was originated from wild melon stocks that show exceptional disease resistance to fusarium and root knot nematodes. Dr. Hassell who has spent his entire career in watermelon research worked with another Clemson researcher and a geneticist from the FDA to bring the **Carolina Strongback** rootstock to the marketplace and the watermelon grafting industry. Dr. Hassell was kind enough to provide our attendee's with seeds for this new rootstock. We have a few seeds left for others that may be interested in using the **Carolina Strongback** as a rootstock for their grafted melons. Dr. Hassell's instruction also included a grafting demonstration with various rootstocks and watermelon scions.

Dr. Katie Neufeld of Syngenta Corp spoke extensively about Powdery and Downy mildew and its control. PM and DM have a constant presence in our Southern growing climate and her remarks on how to best control the diseases were helpful to all.

The seminar also included lunch at a local BBQ place in downtown Winston Salem where 30 plus growers had a chance to sit down, visit and catch up with one another as well as our speakers.

Our yearly raffle included numerous seed lots and products donated from various manufacturers and retailers (**Stoller and AGCare Inc.**). We also thank Mfg. **Bio-Enhanced Organics**, who generously provided each attendee with a free 5 pound bag of BE-1 and an offer for discounted prices on additional BE-1 and Be-2.

Many thanks to all the growers who drove in to Winston Salem for the event, and to Danny Vester and Elijah Meck who helped plan and host the event. Without the help of people who generously give their time, this meeting would not be possible.



California Giant Pumpkin Growers' Seminar

-Cindy Tobeck

The Consumnes CSD, producers of the Elk Grove Giant Pumpkin Festival hosted their annual meeting at the Pavilion at Elk Grove Regional Park just outside of Sacramento on Saturday, March 7th.

Brian Meyers, event organizer and grower, led the meeting that was attended by well over one hundred people. The featured speaker was Washington grower, Jack LaRue as well as his sidekick, Cindy Tobeck. Cindy kicked things off with a talk about the GPC newsletter and urged the many in the room to subscribe. Jack spoke about the history of giant pumpkin growing, and how California has contributed to the record books. He also discussed his methods for selecting pumpkin seeds, and showing pictures of some of his gardening methods including his latest endeavor of covering his entire patch in landscape ground cover to eliminate weeding. Both Cindy and Jack answered many questions from the enthusiastic audience about tomato and pumpkin growing.

Next were the raffles and a wonderful bbq lunch that was catered by the Laguna Lions Club featuring Gary Miller's famously delicious chili as well as burgers and ribs.

The event is a fundraiser for the Elk Grove weigh off, and Brian had a wonderful selection of seeds up for auction that were going for top dollar!

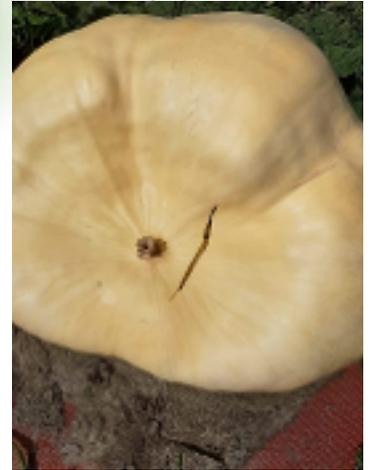


Reports from the Southern Hemisphere



(Above) Garry Smith from Australia grew a funky one that came with a built-in saddle!

(Right) Tim Harris from Australia had a sad season and couldn't get one to the scales.



(Below) Dale Oliver won his weigh off in Australia with his 1491.4 pounder!



(Above) Shane Newitt from Tasmania weighed his pumpkin to 1183 pounds!



(Left) Piet Lotz of S. Africa set a record with his 1895.9 pounder!

(Right) Peet Joubert of S. Africa took 1st place at his weigh off with his 981 pounder!



My 155.67" World Record Long Gourd grown in Serbia

By Goran Lazic

I am Goran Lazic from Serbia. I remember being a kid admiring the big pumpkins that were presented every year in our garden. Its located in the most beautiful city of Kikinda. In the area there used to be an ancient Pannonian sea, which made the land in my patch very fertile, loose and semi-sandy. I still remember my childhood days when I was so excited to see those big crazy pumpkins every Fall. For many years I slowly moved away from backyard gardening. It wasn't until 2019 that I got back into the hobby and showed myself and the whole world, that great effort and passion for my sport that great results can be achieved. This was my 1st year growing Long Gourds. With my 155.67 inch (12.92 ft) Long Gourd I am quite happy and proud of myself and my friends simply because of the success achieved in the with this World Record.

Now I'll tell you something about my Long Gourd. I got the seeds from an old farmer who lives in my village in Serbia. He told me he had been growing them for 30 years and assured me that they were from an old rare "Kikinda" variety of Long Gourds, and they grow extremely long. There are only a few other growers in the world, with these seeds. I carefully sorted through the seeds and planted them in April in a glass germination house. They were started in pots filled with well prepared humus soil. Of the 10 seeds I got, 6 sprouted in late April. I put them outside in mid May. Since I am employed in fruit growing and I have two apricot orchards, I am well versed in agrotechnical soil preparation and plant protection measures. I produced my own fertilizer and compost from various herbs of organic origin. These were composted into fertilizers intended for foliar feeding over leaves and higher concentrations for nutrition on a drip system. My entire garden under the trellis, is 3x2 meters (10ft x 7 ft). Fertilizers are composted from Nettle grass (which interestingly is a gentle diuretic, which helps the body process and flush away toxins), Gravy Butter coffee grounds, aged Beef Cattle Manure, plus well composted vegetable scraps like (Garlic, Carrots, Green Lettuce and more are decomposed in my compost piles). The selection of such simple composted fertilizer is done so that the plant quickly and easily grows in them as they are added as top dressing and lightly raked into the soil over the growing season. Being my 1st year growing Long Gourds I have no problems with any disease or mold like for example I had almost no Leaf Brown Spot problems or stains on the leaves. And since it is of organic origin it is easily accessible to the plant and there is no possibility of burning to destroy the Long Gourd plant. In the initial phase, there is a lot of work to do about the formation of secondary vines because each secondary stem has to be directed by the ropes on my Trellis, for the vines to grow in the direction that we want them to climb. When 80 percent of the plant formation is completed, the flowering stage occurs. Many fruit were open-pollinated by the moths and bees. Then careful and very thoughtful culling selection of Long Gourd fruits were made after most of them were 1-2 meters. This trimming of extra secondary and tertiary vines is the hardest part



for me because doubt always exists in my choices. The secondary and tertiary vines are trimmed and removed at my discretion and the fruits are pollinated at the top of my Long Gourd Tressle which was only 3 meters (9.8 ft) tall. Next year it will be 5m (16.4 ft) tall. I let the moths and bees open pollinate my Long Gourd in the evening.

I keep Long Gourds that are on the main vine or close to the Main vine because the highest nutrient concentration is there.

For the best fruits growing on the plant I say look for a set of twins, they are Long Gourds that are 10 cm apart from each other, and these ones grow very well, because this is the place where the plant has chosen to produce a lot of fruit, possibly it is the most nutrient rich area of the plant. But there are many more fruit that appear. Generally, I left all these fruits that were pollinated, in the initial weeks. Then in 1-2 weeks I culled off every Long Gourd except only three fruits per plant. It is very important that the soil is loose with good formulations and that it is never completely dried out and that it is watered daily with a lot of water. My 155.67" Long Gourd was only 3 weeks old when I harvested it.

I believe this lead to my world record, but of course there were many dangers, like disease and fruit breaking. calcium helps strengthen my LongGourd and possibly prevents breakage. I use it in a diluted nitrate form because it is best absorbed by the plant. In my opinion, the good farming country and open plains we live in contributes to 90 percent of our success. And of course good seed genetics helps in a big way too. Every other day I foliar feed my Long Gourd plants with a diet of compost and fertilizers (that I put into a drip system). All the fertilizers I use and apply to everything is of organic production. When a my plants begin to grow I never stand idle. At any given moment it seems I am checking the plant to see what it lacks. It takes a lot of love and a lot of work.

I even speak with my Long Gourd and give them a lot of tender loving plant care, (like weeding, trimming, tying up the vines, watering and fertilizing organically etc. They like to be told that there is a maximum potential that can be achieved but this only happens with a lot of the aforementioned love. Many will laugh at this. I argue from personal experience that your plants are like living pets and the more you give them love and what they need, the more this wonderful plant will give back very long Gourds to you. The key to success is of course, to do some research and give back to the hobby so others who read publications like this can learn more. If anyone cares about a good seed and getting some good advice, feel free to contact me about more of my special growing secrets.

My email is: majstorza10@gmail.com



MEET CHRIS BROWN!

One of the most memorable events of Saturday night at the International Growers' Convention was when this guy came barreling through the audience at about 50 miles per hour, and jumped up onto the stage during the awards for the 4000-Pound club. He reminded me a little bit of the comedian Chris Farley, as he fiercely thrust his arms into his jacket and posed, smiling and flexing and high-fiving anyone nearby! I loved his enthusiasm and wanted to know his story. I hope you enjoy reading about Chris Brown from Minnesota:

It was March 1st 2020, The Big Show in Fabulous Las Vegas, Nevada, and award night! My name was called to receive my growers jacket. I jumped out of my seat like a jack in the box that had just sprung! With an incredible rush of energy and emotion, I ran towards that stage. As Pete Caspers held my jacket up, I literally jumped into it. Next was the high-fiving of fellow jacket winners and the biggest smile and perhaps the best poses ever seen for that coveted award! The emotion and excitement of that night..... of that moment.....was a culmination of a goal set in April of 2019 and a lot of sweat, tears, and bug bites!

My Name is Chris Brown and my wife is Sara, and we have a 12 year old daughter (Sydney). We live on a small hobby farm of 10 acres in Nowthen, Minnesota (30 miles north of the twin cities). We have 4 dogs, 4 cats, 2 horses and some chickens and pheasants. I have 2 passion: first is family and second is nature. I'm the oldest of 4 kids and our family all lives within 15 miles of each other. In total, there are 10 adults including my parents, and 15 children including my daughter and all the nieces and nephews. Nature is a broader hobby of mine and really engulfs a number of areas. I enjoy fishing, kayaking, hiking, bird watching and of course gardening. I am involved with many citizens science projects that involve monarch butterflies, bird migration and behavior, and mapping reptile, insect, and plant distribution. When I was in high school I won the all school science award my senior year and won many awards at both regionals and state competitions in both plant and animals.



Gardening however is a bit of a different story, and one that requires us to go back in time to get the whole story. On a small farm in north east Iowa in the town of Waterloo is where my grandfather lived. In the mid 1980s at around the age of 5, I remember walking up and down the rows of fruit and vegetables he would grow for his roadside stand. The passion, love, and enjoyment he had for gardening was so contagious to me. So much so that walking barefoot through the rich black dirt of Iowa and picking those big zucchini is how my passion for gardening sprouted! I learned so much from my Grandpa, and he was a willing and patient teacher.

At age 7 we had moved to Minnesota, and I was determined to try gardening without my grandfather being there. Those first few years were tough as my parents knew nothing about gardening and it was a long distance call to grandpa. But through perseverance, trial and error, and as we giant growers know.... always looking forward to next year, magic started to happen in my garden. By 9-10 years of age I was producing peas, potatoes, tomatoes, sweet corn, beans, and even zucchini on my own. I remember when I was twelve years old, the joy, excitement, and fulfillment of a job well done when I picked and brought into the house over 100 ears of sweet corn. My mother could not believe I had grown all that and she let me call Grandpa. Wow a moment I will never forget when he said, "Chris I'm so proud of you, you can grow anything.... you are my Farmer Brown."

MEET CHRIS BROWN! (CONTINUED...)

Years went by, school and life happened, but every year I would go to the state fair and see all these giant fruits, vegetables, and giant pumpkins grown by Bill Foss. I would always think, "Wow I would love to grow something that big... what is their secret?" Year after year I would go to the fair and see these giants. Then the spring of 2016, I'm standing there in a Home Depot looking at the seeds. I kept looking at this package that said, "pumpkins over 100 pounds". I bought it and hoped for 50 pounds. That fall I had a 78 pound pumpkin that I was so proud of. So that winter I jumped online looking for any and all information I could find about growing giant pumpkins. I was overwhelmed and didn't understand all the lingo: pedigree seeds, burying vines, Christmas tree pruning, hand pollination and foaming stumps. I knew I had a lot to learn and had found SCGA (St Croix Growers Association) website and decided I was going to buy the 6 seeds for \$12 bucks and have 2017 be a hands-on trial. I told my family I had gotten special seeds and I was going to grow a giant pumpkin like you see at the fair and they all laughed.

So last May I had them all guess at the final weight. The range was 67 pounds to 269 pounds and my guess was 540 pounds. It was amazing how my entire family was interested and watching my pumpkins' growth. They were always texting me to see what the pumpkin weighed today. Well my biggest pumpkin ended up weighing 763 pounds and 13% over new chart. I was so happy! My daughter even grew one, that hit 212 pounds, way bigger than that 78 pounds I had done the year before.

Last fall at the Anoka Halloween Weigh-Off, surrounded by the likes of Bill Foss, Travis Gienger, Lorelee Zywiec, and Chris Qualley.... I went over 4,000 pounds on that day and they all witnessed my crazy passion and energy as I ran around the site and high-fived everyone! It was a day that I will always remember and most definitely brought to the Big Show.

Lastly I want to thank to my fellow growers, so many of you have answered questions, pointed me in the right direction, and most importantly have been very friendly. The comradery and competition that we all share is a quality that is so genuine in the giant growers I have met and talked with. The willingness to bring new people into the hobby speaks volumes to wanting this sport to grow. I look forward to meeting even more of you as the months and years go by.

May your gardens be full of Giants!!!

-Chris Brown

150 Sq. Foot Challenge: ENTER BY THE APRIL 15 DEADLINE!

150 Square Foot Pumpkin (Green or Orange) Contest is on for 2020 by: bnott1962@gmail.com

Giant Pumpkin growers all want to grow the biggest pumpkin and we each have our limitations. Ever wonder how your skills measure up to other growers if there was a level playing field? Well this will be your chance to compete, have some fun and even learn a few things along the way that will help you grow in the future.

Invitation: Everyone is invited to join the 2020 150 Square Feet Pumpkin Contest take place from Feb. 9th to October 31st (Halloween) 2020. The contest is to grow the heaviest pumpkin possible in a patch of a maximum of 150 square feet (14 square meters). Growing any part of the plant on a vertical structure is not permitted. You will be able to grow any Atlantic Giant pumpkin seed you choose but only one plant per grower is allowed for this contest.

Entry Fee and Prize Structure While everyone is invited there will be a \$2.00 entry fee per grower payable at the start of the Contest. A list of all the contestants will be posted in the 'General Discussion' message board on BigPumpkins.com. All entry fees collected will be returned to the contestants as prize monies. First prize for the heaviest contest pumpkin will be 50% of the collected entry fees, 2nd place, 30% , 3rd place 20%. In the case of ties (equal contest weights) the place monies for those places will be combined and equally divided among the tying entries. For example, it is possible for there to be 4 growers all with the same top weight. In that case all place monies for places 1, 2, and 3 will be combined and divided equally among the 4 contestants and there would be no remaining monies for the next heaviest pumpkins. Any un-awarded entry fees will be donated to BigPumpkins.com

How and When to Enter To enter declare your participation in the Contest by sending an email to bnott1962@gmail.com with your full name and Bigpumpkins.com screen name. Instructions for the payment of the entry fee will be provided by return confirmation email. This year both mailed and paypal entries will be accepted. The last day for email entry will be 15 April 2020 and entry fee must be received by 29 April 2020. A complete list of entries by 'screen name' will be posted in the 'General Discussion' message board on BigPumpkins.com no later than 30 April 2020.

Weigh off Requirements All pumpkins will be weighed in accordance with GPC standards. Weights in Kilograms will be converted to pounds. For the purpose of this contest only, all weights will be rounded down to the nearest one half pound.

1) Everyone is honest by definition and this must be fun!

2) You may grow any Atlantic Giant pumpkin seed of your choice.

3) The maximum area is 150 sq. ft. (14 sq. meter). The entire plant including the pumpkin must be totally contained within the stated 150 (14) area at all times. Increasing plant size by going vertical will NOT be permitted. A question was 'do the leaves need to stay inside the contest area? The simple answer is NO, leaves may hang over the outside but the vines and pumpkin must not touch the area outside the contest area. A leaf that falls down outside is ok because it is not a 'rooted' part of the plant. The area of the pumpkin that supports its weight must clearly remain inside the contest area.

4) All pumpkins will be weighed in accordance with GPC standards. Weights in Kilograms will be converted to pounds. For this contest all contest weights will be rounded down to the nearest one half pound. (GPC weights will be accepted subject to the same rounding.)

5) No minimum age for the pumpkins or contestants.

6) Pumpkin can be weighed on any date during the Contest but must be weighed on or before 31

October 2020. The contest period may be concluded at any prior date if all contestants have their pumpkins weighed or they withdraw from competition.

7) **Photos are required**, the type and timing are listed below. Each photo should contain the contest standard reference object. The standard contest reference object will be a 12 Fl. Oz. (355ml) beverage can. To make it easier for everyone to follow your 150 Contest entry in your Bigpumpkins.com diary you should make "150" a prominent part of each entry.

7a) **An early photo of the patch** so all can see that each grower is making appropriate effort to keep to 150 sq.ft. This photo should be taken early with or without a plant or hoop house but does not need to be posted until after everyone has plants set out. Because conditions can be very different from one growers location to another there is no mandatory posting date, BUT each grower is expected to make the best effort to be fair and timely. (Remember rule #1) Growers are not required to add special fencing nor permanent objects to their patch to mark out the 150 area. Normal items like temporary walking boards, maybe a natural physical barrier, other plants or even a line in the soil is acceptable. These 'markers' do not need to remain for the duration of the growing season as we will be able to look at the earlier photo to see where they once were. Photoshop type markings on this picture are acceptable.

7b) **Post hoop house photo.** This photo should be taken when the hoop house is removed and submitted within the week. For those growing in a green house, without a hoop house, a photo should be taken and submitted when the main vine is 6 to 8 feet (2 to 2 1/2 meters) long.

7c) **Full patch.** A photo once all patch space is occupied. Best effort, this is fun. You don't need to replace earlier markers.

7d) **The keeper.** It is expected that the standard contest size reference object be in all the pictures especially with the keeper. First required keeper photo should be when it is 10 to 20 days and submitted no later than day 30. Yes you can sandbag but need to show something by day 30 after pollination. **Disasters happen** (splits, aborts etc.). Should some natural disaster happen to your selected fruit after the 30 day photo that requires a new pollination you must immediately post a picture of the disaster, followed by pictures as required to show the new pollination and its progress at least weekly for the first 30 days. Repeat this process as many times as necessary for any succeeding disaster. Yes this sounds like a penalty and yes we will all have more fun at your expense but it will be fun. It could be worse.

7e) **Final weigh off picture.** A picture of your contest entry on the scale showing the weight will count as the final official picture. If logistics at your weigh off don't permit a picture of the pumpkin on the scale with the weight then make the best effort to 'document' the weight with photos. Remember Rule #1.

7f) **More pictures** are always welcome to keep everyone interested and have fun.

8) **When in doubt**, remember rule #1 and contact bnott1962@gmail.com with questions you may have.

Current Contest Record

The current World Record for the 150 square foot Contest is held by Mr. John Butler of Canada with 1175.6 pounds! Some might say there is no 2nd place in giant pumpkins but they would be very wrong. Mr. Joe Jarras of Rhode Island was 'second' in 2019 but He holds the World Record for Green Squash in the 150 sq ft Contest with 1109 pounds. Both of these gentlemen are the first to prove you can grow a 1000 lb pumpkin (or squash) in only 150 sq ft. (The 150 sq ft Contest is color blind to Atlantic Giant Fruit so a pound is a pound no matter the color)

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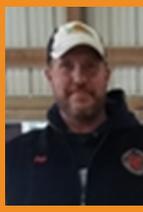
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SUBMIT ARTICLES TO THE GPC COMMON GROUND!



Thank you for reading Edition 5 of The GPC Common Ground! It is my hope to publish a newsletter that reflects the interests of giant fruit and vegetable growers as well as provide educational content, grower features, event recaps, club spotlights, and regional highlights.

It is the intent of the GPC board to provide this newsletter to growers worldwide as a means to exchange information, grow community, and advance the weights of giant produce.

Article submissions are welcome! GPC Common Ground will be by growers, for growers. **It is easiest for me if articles are sent in a plain text email, or a Word document with photos in jpg format. Editing pdf files is difficult and time consuming, and sometimes impossible.**

GPC Common Ground will be published a minimum of three times per year and sent via email to subscribers. To subscribe, visit with GPC website: www.gpc1.org. Archived newsletters will be posted on the GPC website.

Please direct feedback, photos, inquiries and article submissions to:

Cindy Tobeck

cindy@gpc1.org

What a CRAZY time in our world's history! Following the GPC International Growers' Convention, the COVID-19 virus spread faster than powdery mildew, and many of us are finding ourselves in strange and difficult circumstances regarding work, family and social time. Spring meetings were canceled, schools and businesses were shut down, toilet paper was hoarded, and many of us are currently under a stay-at-home order. I hope that you stay healthy and find comfort in your gardening endeavors this spring.

-Cindy

