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GPC Common Ground

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

The House That Giant Pumpkins Built



Nestled in Windsor, Nova Scotia, the Dill family farmhouse stands as a symbol of one of the most important legacies in horticultural history. It was here that **Howard Dill** developed the Atlantic Giant, the genetics that transformed giant pumpkin growing from a novelty into a worldwide pursuit. Every modern giant pumpkin can trace its lineage back to Howard's work. Without the Atlantic Giant and the famous "Dill genes," it is hard to imagine pumpkins ever reaching today's astonishing sizes of more than 3,000 pounds. From humble beginnings on this family farm grew a passion and a genetic foundation that continues to fuel world records nearly two decades after Howard's passing.

The Man Who Moved the Mountain

by Cecil Weston

How Ron Wallace Helped Redefine the Limits of Giant Pumpkin Growing



When the scale settled at 3,156 pounds in Warren, Rhode Island this October, the giant pumpkin world witnessed one of the most remarkable achievements in the history of the hobby. Ron Wallace's enormous pumpkin did more than establish a new world record. It became the first pumpkin ever to exceed 3,000 pounds, a milestone many growers believed was still years away.

For most growers, a single world record is enough to secure a permanent place in pumpkin history. Ron has now done it three times, each representing a major milestone in the sport's evolution. More importantly, he has become the only grower to break three of the sport's great modern barriers: 1,500 pounds, 2,000 pounds, and now 3,000 pounds.



As the giant pumpkin community celebrates this historic accomplishment, it is worth looking back at how far the hobby has come and the significant role the name Wallace has played in that journey.

A Century of Progress

The world record giant pumpkin weighed just 400 pounds in 1900 when William Warnock established the benchmark that would stand as the foundation of giant pumpkin growing. Over the following decades, the record advanced steadily through the efforts of pioneers such as Howard Dill, Norm Gallagher, Gordon Thomson, Joel Holland, and many others who pushed the boundaries of genetics and growing techniques.

The Man Who Moved the Mountain - cont

Year	Grower(s)	Weight (lbs)		Year	Grower(s)	Weight (lbs)
1900	William Warnock	400.0 lb		2002	Charlie Houghton	1,337.6 lb
1904	William Warnock	403.0 lb		2003	Steve Daletas	1,385.0 lb
1976	Edgar Van Wyck	453.0 lb		2004	Al Eaton	1,446.0 lb
1980	Howard Dill	459.0 lb		2005	Larry Checkon	1,469.0 lb
1981	Howard Dill	493.5 lb		2006	Ron Wallace	1,502.0 lb
1984	Norm Gallagher	612.0 lb		2007	Joe Jutras	1,689.0 lb
1986	Robert Gancarz	671.0 lb		2009	Christy Harp	1,725.0 lb
1989	Gordon Thomson	755.0 lb		2010	Chris Stevens	1,810.5 lb
1990	Ed Gancarz	816.5 lb		2011	Jim & Kelsey Bryson	1,818.5 lb
1992	Joel Holland	827.0 lb		2012	Ron Wallace	2,009.0 lb
1993	Donald Black	884.0 lb		2013	Tim Mathison	2,032.0 lb
1994	Herman Bax	990.0 lb		2014	Beni Meier	2,323.7 lb
1996	Nathan & Paula Zehr	1,061.0 lb		2016	Mathias Willemijns	2,624.6 lb
1998	Gary Burke	1,092.0 lb		2021	Stefano Cutrupi	2,702.9 lb
1999	Gerry Checkon	1,131.0 lb		2023	Travis Gienger	2,749.0 lb
2000	Dave Stelts	1,140.0 lb		2025	Ian & Stuart Paton	2,819.3 lb
2001	Geneva Emmons	1,262.0 lb		2026	Ian Paton	2856.8 lb

By the early 2000s, the hobby entered a period of explosive growth. Improvements in genetics, soil science, nutrition, and cultural practices accelerated progress unlike anything previously seen. World records began falling almost annually, and each new benchmark fueled the belief that even larger pumpkins were possible.



In 2005, Larry Checkon raised the world record to 1,469 pounds, a weight that seemed almost unimaginable to many growers at the time. The following season, however, Ron changed the conversation forever.



The First Great Barrier At the Frerichs Farm weigh-off in 2006, Ron unveiled a 1,502 pound giant that became the first pumpkin in history to exceed 1,500 pounds. The achievement established a new world record and immediately placed his name among the legends of the hobby.

Looking back today, 1,500 pounds may not seem extraordinary compared to modern weights. At the time, however, it represented a monumental leap forward. Just six years earlier, the world record had stood at 1,140 pounds. The rapid advance demonstrated that the sport was entering a new era, and many of the genetics that would drive future growth traced directly to the innovations and breeding programs developed by growers like Ron.

Yet greater challenges still lay ahead.

The Man Who Moved the Mountain - cont

Chasing the One-Ton Dream



For years, growers viewed the 2,000 pound mark as the ultimate objective. It became giant pumpkin growing's equivalent of the four minute mile, a barrier that seemed tantalizingly close yet frustratingly elusive.

The record continued to advance. Joe Jutras pushed it to 1,689 pounds in 2007. Christy and Nick Harp reached 1,725 pounds in 2009. Chris Stevens and Jim and Kelsey Bryson inched the mark higher in 2010 and 2011. Each season brought anticipation that someone, somewhere, might finally break through the one ton mark.







Then, in 2012, Ron did exactly that.

At the Topsfield Fair, his historic pumpkin weighed 2,009 pounds, becoming the first officially recognized one ton pumpkin in history. It was more than a new world record. It was a defining moment for the entire giant pumpkin community, proving that the seemingly impossible could become reality through innovation, persistence, and decades of cumulative knowledge.



The Man Who Moved the Mountain - cont

The Race to Three Thousand



After the one-ton barrier fell, progress accelerated once again. Tim Mathison moved the record to 2,032 pounds in 2013, and just a year later Beni Meier shattered expectations with a 2,323.7 pound giant.



In 2016, Mathias Willemijns stunned the pumpkin world with a 2624.6 pound behemoth, one of the most dramatic record jumps ever recorded.



The momentum continued through the achievements of Stefano Cutrupi, Travis Gienger, and Ian and Stuart Paton.



Rather than slowing as the weights climbed higher, the pace of progress seemed to accelerate. Elite growers pushed one another to ever greater heights, each new record inspiring the next challenge. In 2025, Ian and Stuart Paton had once again raised the bar with a 2818.9 lb entry, and Ian Paton pushed it forward again in 2026 to 2856.8.

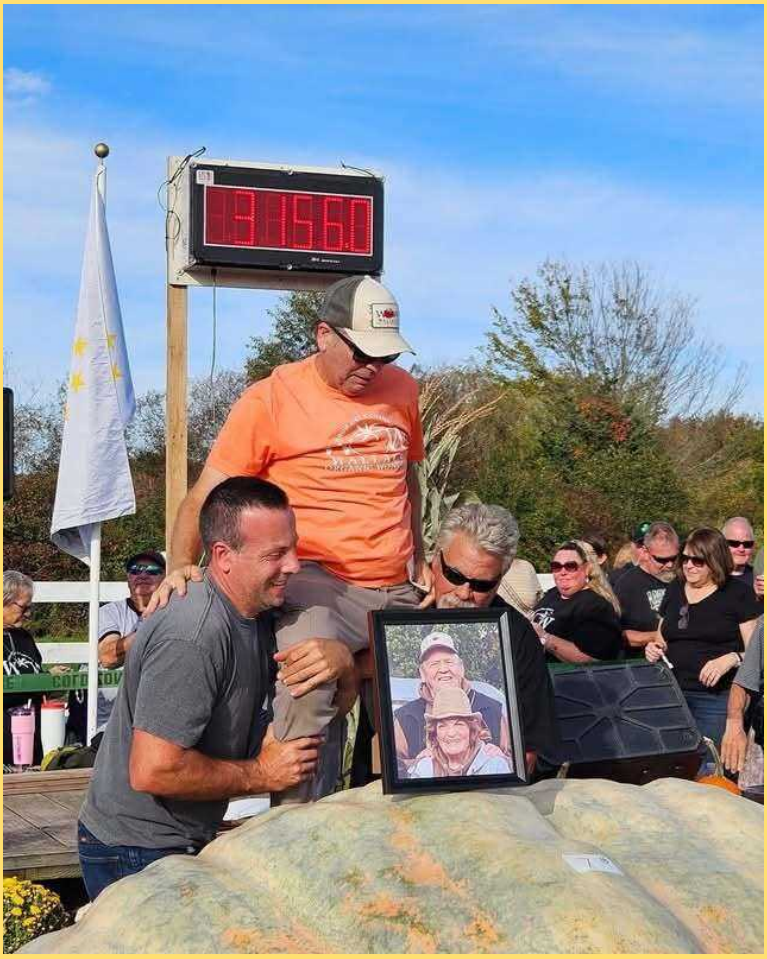






As the season began to wind down it was believed that the long awaited 3,000 pound barrier might elude us one more time. Would one of the last weigh offs produce one this year or were we still chasing the elusive mark?

The Man Who Moved the Mountain - cont



What few anticipated was that the barrier would not simply be broken, but shattered.

When Ron's pumpkin registered 3,156 pounds, it did not merely edge past the existing world record. It surpassed it by more than 300 pounds and established an entirely new frontier for the hobby. For the third time in his career, he had become the grower who carried giant pumpkin growing into unexplored territory.

The Numbers Behind the Achievement

The progression of world records tells a remarkable story.

The world record stood at 1,469 pounds in 2005. In 2026, it stands at 3,156 pounds. During that 21 year span, the record increased by 1,687 pounds. Put another way, the increase alone is greater than the entire world-record pumpkin that existed when Ron first entered the record books in 2006.

Equally impressive is the fact that Ron’s world records mark three defining chapters in the sport's evolution:

1,502 pounds in 2006, the first pumpkin over 1,500 pounds.

2,009 pounds in 2012, the first pumpkin over 2,000 pounds.

3,156 pounds in 2026, the first pumpkin over 3,000 pounds.

While many outstanding growers advanced the world record between those milestones, it was Ron Wallace who repeatedly redefined where the next frontier would be.

What Comes Next?

The obvious question now is whether giant pumpkins can someday reach 3,500 pounds or even 4,000 pounds.

History suggests caution whenever we try to predict the future. Growers once believed that 1,500 pounds was unreachable. Later, many questioned whether a one-ton pumpkin would ever be grown. The same doubts surrounded the 3,000 pound barrier only a few years ago.

Yet every major milestone has eventually fallen.

The Man Who Moved the Mountain - cont

If the world record continues to improve at roughly the pace seen since 2006, a 3,500 pound pumpkin could realistically appear within the next five years. Continued advances in genetics, soil biology, plant nutrition, and environmental management will undoubtedly play significant roles. At the same time, increasing pumpkin size brings greater challenges related to structural integrity, transportation, plant stress, and disease management. Every additional pound becomes more difficult to achieve than the one before it.

Whether the next great barrier falls in five years or fifteen, one fact seems certain: the giant pumpkin community will continue to pursue it with the same passion that has driven the hobby for generations.



A Lasting Legacy

Records are made to be broken. Every grower understands that.

Milestones, however, are different.

When future generations look back at the history of giant pumpkin growing, they will undoubtedly remember many remarkable champions and record holders. But they will also see several defining moments that changed what growers believed was possible.

The first 1,500 pound pumpkin.

The first one ton pumpkin.

The first 3,000 pound pumpkin.

All three bear the name of Ron Wallace. That accomplishment alone secures his place among the most influential growers the hobby has ever known. As the giant pumpkin community celebrates his latest achievement, it is worth recognizing that we are witnessing not simply another world record, but the continuation of a legacy that has helped shape the modern era of giant pumpkin growing itself.

Celebrating the 2026 GPC Growers of the Year

A Grower of the Year title isn't won with a single exceptional fruit. It requires a season-long commitment to excellence, consistency, and execution. Across the Giant Pumpkin Commonwealth's eight recognized categories, the 2026 champions demonstrated exactly that by producing three officially weighed entries and accumulating the highest combined





2026 Grower of the Year Champions

Category	Grower	Location	Top 3 Total
Giant Pumpkin	Ian Paton	Lymington, England	7,548.24 lbs
Giant Squash	Fred & Shirley Ansems	Steam Mill, Nova Scotia, Canada	3,188.00 lbs
Bushel Gourd	Quinn Werner	Saegertown, Pennsylvania, USA	971.50 lbs
Watermelon	Nick McCaslin	Hawesville, Kentucky, USA	820.10 lbs
Long Gourd	Dennis Hartung	Palmerston, Ontario, Canada	431.50 in
Field Pumpkin	Michael Paul	Edgar, Wisconsin, USA	489.50 lbs
Marrow	Team Kuerbis-Strauss	Vehlen, Brandenburg, Germany	345.80 lbs
Tomato	Cindy Tobeck	Olympia, Washington, USA	23.13 lbs

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totals in their respective divisions.

While no category records fell during the 2026 season, the year's winners delivered impressive performances from start to finish. From giant pumpkins approaching 7,550 pounds combined, to squash totals topping 3,100 pounds, these growers proved that sustained success across multiple weigh-offs remains one of the most difficult accomplishments in competitive giant vegetable growing.



The Grower of the Year program continues to recognize the grower or team with the highest combined total from three qualifying entries. For pumpkins, squash, field pumpkins, bushel gourds, watermelons, marrows, and tomatoes, champions are determined by combined weight. In the long gourd category, combined inches determine the winner.

This year's champions represent four countries and regions across the GPC

Celebrating the 2026 GPC Growers of the Year







community and showcase the international strength of competitive growing.

Leading the way was England's Ian Paton, whose three giant pumpkins combined for an outstanding 7,548.24 pounds. Fred and Shirley Ansems continued their dominance in giant squash with a combined 3,188 pound effort, while Quinn Werner once again demonstrated remarkable consistency in bushel gourds, accumulating 971.50 pounds across three entries.

Every 2026 Grower of the Year champion achieved something few growers ever accomplish: producing three elite fruits in a single season and transporting them successfully to multiple official weigh-offs. Their dedication, planning, and perseverance represent the very best of the GPC community and set the standard for future competitors.

2026 GPC Master Gardeners



Many growers dream of producing a winning pumpkin, squash, or bushel gourd. The GPC Master Gardener competition asks for much more. To earn Master Gardener recognition, participants must successfully grow and exhibit competitive entries in at least five categories, demonstrating versatility across a wide range of giant fruits and vegetables.

Because it rewards breadth as much as excellence, many growers consider Master Gardener to be one of the most challenging achievements within the GPC. Success requires mastering multiple crops, managing different growing habits and harvest schedules, and consistently delivering quality entries throughout the season.

The 2026 competition featured another deep and accomplished field of growers from across North America and Europe. In the end, **defending champion Quinn Werner of Saegertown, Pennsylvania successfully repeated as GPC Master Gardener Champion, earning 258.8 points** through outstanding performances in squash, pumpkins, field pumpkins, bushel gourds, and tomatoes. His winning campaign was highlighted by a 1,446 pound squash, a 2,208.5 pound pumpkin, and a 363.5 pound bushel gourd, demonstrating the versatility required to excel across multiple categories. **Werner's repeat title came against a field that included several recent Master Gardener champions, including two-time winner Cindy Tobeck (2021 and 2022) and 2024 champion Tom Trombley, who was also the runner-up to Werner in 2025.**

2026 GPC Master Gardeners

Second place went to **Cindy Tobeck of Olympia, Washington** with **247.1 points**. Tobeck's season was powered by exceptional tomato results along with strong entries in squash, pumpkins, marrows, and field pumpkins.

Following by just a few points behind her was **Tom Trombley of Standish, Michigan**, whose balanced effort across five categories produced **244.7 points** and a third-place finish.

The competition remained strong throughout the Top 10, with former and current category champions appearing throughout the standings. International growers were also well represented, with competitors from Canada, Belgium, Germany, Austria, Switzerland, France, and the United Kingdom contributing to one of the most diverse Master Gardener fields in recent memory.





Ultimately, the Master Gardener award celebrates a different kind of achievement. Rather than specializing in a single fruit, these growers demonstrate the ability to succeed across multiple crops, multiple weigh-offs, and a wide range of growing conditions. Their accomplishments reflect the knowledge, dedication, and versatility that continue to define the best growers in the GPC.

2026 Master Gardener Qualifiers

Place	Grower	Points
1	**Quinn Werner**	**258.8**
2	**Cindy Tobeck**	**247.1**
3	**Tom Trombley**	**244.7**
4	Fred & Shirley Ansems	236.5
5	Luc Berrens	209.8
6	Dan Peterson	195.5
7	Todd Kline	195.3
8	Sarah Whitty	194.9
9	Chris Ansems	187.2
10	Christopher MacDonald	183.4
11	Team PA-Scha	178.5
12	Bob & Elaine MacKenzie	173.6
13	Brian Christensen	173.3
14	Brian Mathiowetz	171.1
15	Jerry Gibson	169.6
16	Jeff Pelletier	169.6
17	Fredrich Melka	167.4
18	Donald Crews	166.4
19	Team Tracy & Candra Carter	165.6
20	Armand Charlot	159.7
21	Florian Isler	159.2
22	John Butler	155.7
23	Terry Weber	155.6
24	John Harnica	154.1
25	Michael Paul	147.1
26	Ken Zappitella	146.7
27	Nic Welty	145.9
28	Curtis Leach	143.8
29	Team Kuerbis-Strauss	141.7
30	Mehdi Daho	141.4
31	Matthias Leuenberger	136.9
32	Andre Becker	136.9

Place	Grower	Points
33	Jennie Flood	135.9
34	Harvey Cardwell	134.7
35	James Crise	133.6
36	Rusty Caspers	130.7
37	Art Johnston	130.0
38	Paul Jarosh	128.9
39	Joe Tucker	128.1
40	Terry & Lois Nelson	125.3
41	Andy & Amy Corbin	123.8
42	Samuel Brault	123.6
43	Jay Yohe	119.4
44	Del & Julie Faust	118.4
45	Adam Thomas	117.4
46	Justin Powell	116.2
47	Matthias Gruber	113.6
48	Richie Johnson	109.9
49	Randy Warren	108.9
50	Jim Beal	101.2
51	Doug Brimley	100.3
52	Leon Busby	95.2
53	Michel Krieger	92.0
54	Catharina Ansems	90.5
55	Douglas A. Court	85.2
56	James & Rachel Cain	85.2
57	Steven Josso	82.7
58	Team Tulln Giants	81.7
59	Justin Nelson	79.0
60	Norbert Andres	76.0
61	Marty Schnicker	75.4
62	Joe Marzo	64.9
63	Ken Kolb	53.9
64	Patrick Teichmann	14.6

State and National Records Fall Around the Globe in 2026

The 2026 giant pumpkin season was one for the record books, as growers across North America, Europe, and Africa rewrote their state and national record lists. In total, 11 U.S. state records and six national records fell during the season, reflecting the continued advancement of genetics, growing techniques, and grower experience around the world.

The most dramatic record-breaking performance came in Rhode Island, where Ron Wallace raised the state record to an astonishing 3,156 pounds (1,431.5 kg), surpassing Steven Sperry's 2023 mark of 2,465.5 pounds (1,118.3 kg) by 690.5 pounds (313.2 kg). The pumpkin also became the new world record and further cemented Wallace's place among the sport's elite competitors.





Another massive jump occurred in Illinois, where Phil Groenewold grew a 2,492.5 pound (1,130.6 kg) pumpkin, eclipsing Gene McMullen's long-standing 2015 state record of 2,145.5 pounds (973.2 kg) by 347 pounds (157.4 kg).



In Oregon, Jim Sherwood's 2,613 pound(1,185.2 kg) giant finally toppled Steve Daletas' 2018 state record of 2,469 pounds (1,119.9 kg) by 144 pounds (65.3 kg), ending one of the nation's longest-standing heavyweight records.



Several growers improved records they already owned. Josh Monin increased Kentucky's state record from 2,209 pounds (1,002.0 kg) to 2,481 pounds (1,125.4 kg), a gain of 272 pounds (123.4 kg).



In Wyoming, Andy and Amy Corbin improved their own state mark by 139 pounds (63.1 kg), raising it from 2,085 pounds (945.7 kg) to 2,224 pounds (1,008.8 kg).



Allen Clark likewise extended his New Mexico record from 1,010 pounds (458.1 kg) to 1,056 pounds (479.0 kg), adding another 46 pounds (20.9 kg) to the state standard.



Other notable state records included Woodrow Lancaster's 2,598 pound (1,178.4 kg) Massachusetts giant, which exceeded Jamie Graham's previous mark of 2,480 pounds (1,124.9 kg) by 118 pounds (53.5 kg).



Kyle Koschmeder raised Montana's record from 1,591 pounds (721.7 kg) to 1,731 pounds (785.2 kg), an improvement of 140 pounds (63.5 kg).

State and National Records Fall Around the Globe in 2026



In Indiana, Todd Friermood's 2,074 pound (940.8 kg) entry bettered Steve Strickler's 2023 record of 2,054 pounds (931.7 kg) by 20 pounds (9.1 kg), while Adam Momirov nudged Ohio's record upward by 8 pounds (3.6 kg) with a 2,513 pound (1,139.9 kg) giant, surpassing the previous record of 2,505 pounds (1,136.2 kg).



David and Gwen Harris recorded a 1861.6 (844.4 kg) edging out Dustin Prices' previous 1845.5 (837.1 kg) Virginia's state record by 16.1 pounds (7.3 kg), while John Dunman nearly doubled Arkansas' previous mark, increasing the record from 467 pounds (211.8 kg) to 876.5 pounds (397.6 kg), a remarkable gain of 409.5 pounds (185.8 kg).





The record-breaking was not confined to the United States. Around the world, several countries also established new national standards. In Denmark, Peter Holst Olsen improved his own national record from 2,459.9 pounds (1,115.8 kg) to 2,641.1 pounds (1,198.0 kg), a gain of 181.2 pounds (82.2 kg). The United Kingdom record also fell as Ian Paton raised the British standard from 2,818.9 pounds (1,278.6 kg) to 2,856.8 pounds (1,295.8 kg), adding 37.9 pounds (17.2 kg) to the mark he helped establish in 2025.





Perhaps equally impressive was the progress seen in South Africa, where Piet Lotz pushed the national record from 2,469 pounds (1,120 kg) to 2,691 pounds (1,221 kg), an improvement of 222 pounds (101 kg).



In Poland, Tomasz Olejniczak established a new national record of 2,023.8 pounds (918 kg), surpassing the previous standard of 1,999.5 pounds (907 kg) by 24.3 pounds (11 kg).



Portugal's Jose Rui Santos improved his own national record from 1,889 pounds (857 kg) to 1,995.2 pounds (905 kg), a gain of 106.2 pounds (48 kg).



New national benchmarks were also established in Mexico, where Franz Peters produced a 1,688 pound (765.7 kg) pumpkin, and in Slovakia, where Matej Tomkovic set the country's record at 556.9 pounds (252.6 kg).

From emerging giant pumpkin regions to long-established powerhouses, the 2026 season demonstrated that records remain vulnerable in every corner of the world. In fact, nine of the seventeen records broken this season were surpassed by more than 100 pounds (45.4 kg), highlighting not only the strength of today's genetics but also the remarkable skill of the growers who continue pushing the boundaries of what is possible.

What Led to the Leap?

By Cecil Weston

Growers Share the Changes Behind Their Biggest Personal Bests

Every grower dreams of breaking through to the next level. While genetics certainly play a role, large jumps in personal bests rarely come from a single magic product or secret technique. More often, they are the result of several improvements working together.

This year, several growers achieved remarkable increases over their previous personal bests. We asked them a simple question: "*What do you believe was the biggest difference between your previous best and this year's success?*"

Their answers reveal some interesting common themes.

Mike Alves: Bigger Patch, Better Environment



Mike increased his personal best from **1,714 pounds to 2,359 pounds**, a gain of more than 600 pounds.

When reflecting on the differences, Mike immediately pointed to expanding his growing area. His patch size doubled from approximately 600 square feet to 1,200 square feet, creating more photosynthesis, allowing the plant greater access to resources and root development.

He also focused on creating a more stable growing environment by installing a new misting system controlled by timers. Consistent moisture and environmental control can help reduce plant stress during the hottest periods of the season.

Another area of emphasis was soil biology. Mike incorporated biological products from several manufacturers and concentrated on improving overall soil health throughout the season.

As for other techniques, he joked, "I tried singing to them, but pretty sure that didn't help."

Jim Sherwood: Bigger plants earlier

Jim has made a few big jumps over the last few years, from the **high 1800s to a new PB of 2613 pounds**. His response to the inquiry: I feel the addition of CO2 early in the season to get my plants as big as possible early on, has made the biggest difference. My plants were 1200 SF this year (biggest ever). In the immortal words of James Ford "You need big salad to grow a big pumpkin"!



What Led to the Leap? - cont

Phil Groenewold: Making Every Decision More Intentional

Few growers made a larger leap than Phil, who improved from **1,666 pounds to a 2,492.5 pound for a new Illinois State Record**.



Phil credits a combination of changes rather than any single factor. The first was moving to a new growing site with different soil conditions. Before planting, he used soil test results to guide decisions rather than following a standard program.

One of the biggest adjustments involved his fertility program. Rather than mixing multiple products together, Phil began making separate applications, believing this helped avoid potential incompatibilities between products and ensured each application delivered its intended benefit.

Water management was another major change. He supplied roughly 60 to 80 gallons of water per day, split between morning and evening applications to maintain more consistent soil moisture levels.

Phil also spent considerable time researching genetics, selecting seeds with proven histories of producing pumpkins that weigh heavy for their measurements.

Perhaps just as important was increased focus. At his new location, he has room for only one plant. Managing a single approximately 700 square foot plant allowed him to devote more time and attention to every aspect of its growth than when he previously managed multiple plants.

Jake Leonard: Great Genetics & Disease control was the key



Jake increased his PB from **1950 to 2273 pounds.** He recounted that the only real change from previous years was treating for "just about everything" after losing a good portion of his plant early to disease. He added, "With all of the issues I had with the plant, I honestly think the single biggest factor for my PB was the seed I grew. I think that seed has a lot more to give (2819.3 Paton)."

What Led to the Leap? - cont

Adam Momirov: Solving Problems Rather Than Reinventing the Program

Ohio grower Adam pushed his personal best from **1,864 pounds to a 2,513 pound for a new Ohio State Record**, but his story is notable because he didn't completely change his growing program.

According to Adam, patch preparation remained largely unchanged. He continued using winter rye as a cover crop and grew in the same location as previous years. Plant size was also similar, reaching approximately 1,000 to 1,100 square feet.



Instead, the improvements came from identifying and correcting limitations.

One key change involved modifying his fencing arrangement. He found that green fabric fencing along the west side of the patch was creating excessive heat and contributing to plant burn. Increasing air movement around the plant reduced this issue and created a healthier growing environment.

Another significant project involved water management. A natural spring caused water to remain stagnant in portions of the patch. Adam dug a trench through the area to redirect the water away from the growing space, improving drainage and reducing excess moisture around the root zone.

His experience serves as a reminder that gains don't always come from adding products or changing genetics. Sometimes the biggest improvements result from removing stresses that have been holding a plant back.

What Led to the Leap? - cont

Linden Fowler: 1805 to 2195: Building on the Fundamentals



The first item on Linden's list of changes that he felt improved his grow was that this was only the second year he had enough space to allow plants to reach their intended size (1000-1300 sq ft) after previously growing in a backyard with only about 150 square feet of growing area.

Secondly, with more time available to prepare the site compared to his first season (last year) at the property, he was able to implement a much more complete soil improvement program by growing a cover crop over winter as well as applying all of recommended amendments based on test results. He also added mustard meal, which was recommended by fellow grower, Leonardo Urena.

Another change he made was using heat cables 12-18 inches deep under his best plant this year and maintained the soil temp between 75-82 degrees all season long. He said the results were hard to ignore. A comparison plant grown without heating cables developed a crown only about one-quarter the size of the heated plant.

Water management was another area of increased focus. In addition to drip tape irrigation, he added overhead wobblers during the first half of the season to help cool plants during periods of extreme heat. Overall, he estimates supplying approximately 3**0 percent more water than the previous year** while paying particular attention to newly buried vines.

Perhaps the most valuable addition wasn't a product at all.

Throughout the season he participated in a small group chat with three other growers, where ideas, observations, and challenges were discussed daily. The constant exchange of information helped everyone identify problems early and learn from one another's experiences.

He also noted that he took a more proactive approach to pest management after battling whiteflies the previous year, applying garlic and neem oil early in the season and avoiding the same level of infestation this season.

Lastly, he pointed out that both his personal best last year and this year grew on the exact same patch. With 4 different patches, this one patch has produced his personal best two years in a row. That area also happens to be above his leech field.

What Led to the Leap? - cont

Common Themes

While each grower's approach above was different, several recurring themes emerged:

- Better management of soil moisture through improved watering practices and drainage.
- Greater focus on plant environment, stress reduction, and plant health.
- More attention to soil biology and soil health.
- Being Proactive, not REACTIVE
- Increased emphasis on selecting proven genetics.
- Expanding growing space where possible.
- Spending more time observing and responding to a plant's specific needs.

Perhaps the most important takeaway is that none of these growers attribute their success to a single miracle input. Their results came from identifying weaknesses, making thoughtful adjustments, and executing the fundamentals more consistently.

As Adam noted, information sharing is one of the ways the hobby continues to move forward. By learning from each other's successes and failures, growers continue to push the limits of what's possible.

Looking Deeper

The stories reveal that large gains often come from a collection of small improvements rather than a single breakthrough.

Many of us look for a silver bullet when we see someone knock one out of the park, but often the answer is far less mysterious. Sometimes success comes from doing the same things we've always done, just doing them better, more consistently, and with greater attention to detail.

A couple of growers went beyond simply answering the question and shared a much more detailed look at their seasons. The following articles explore those experiences in greater detail and offer additional insight into the decisions, challenges, and lessons learned along the way.

What Led to the Leap? - cont

Josh Monin: 1,508 to 2,481 Pounds: If You Control the Water, You Can Grow a Big Pumpkin

By Josh Monin



Looking back over the last two growing seasons, it's hard to believe how far I've come. My previous personal best was 1,508 pounds. In 2025, I grew a 2,209-pound pumpkin outdoors, and then followed that up with a 2,481-pound pumpkin in 2026, grown inside my greenhouse.

While there wasn't one magic product or secret that made it happen, I believe the biggest difference came from changing the way I thought about growing giant pumpkins.

The 2025 Breakthrough: A Change in Mindset

The biggest change between my 1,508-pound personal best and my 2,209-pound pumpkin in 2025 was a different way of thinking. I never really struggled with getting big daily gains. My 1,508 had several days with 40–50-pound gains. My problem had always been disease and keeping the plant healthy. I had never had a pumpkin make it past DAP 70, and my 1,508 actually stopped growing at DAP 62.

I finally realized that if I wanted to grow a truly big pumpkin, I needed to focus on plant health above everything else.

I knew big rains usually meant big problems in my patch. I started thinking that if I could get a drought year combined with my feeding and spray schedule, I might finally have a chance to make a run at the Kentucky state record, which at the time was 1,882 pounds.

In 2025, growing outdoors, I relied entirely on drip irrigation and never watered over the top of the plant. During a three-month period, I recorded only two inches of rain at my patch. The dry conditions made managing plant health much easier. I also learned that I didn't need to constantly push water. I only watered enough to maintain the daily gains I wanted while keeping the plant healthy.

The results were something I had never experienced before. My 2,209-pound pumpkin, grown from the 2560 Geinger seed, reached DAP 94. That was 32 days longer than any pumpkin I had ever grown before. For me, that was the real breakthrough. It wasn't necessarily about getting bigger daily gains. It was about keeping a healthy plant growing and producing fruit for a much longer period of time.

What Led to the Leap? - cont

Taking Water Management to Another Level in 2026

I had actually started building and experimenting with greenhouse growing in 2025, but my 2,209-pound pumpkin was grown outdoors. My first greenhouse season came with a pretty steep learning curve, and I grew two pumpkins in the 1,600-pound range.

By 2026, I had worked out many of the kinks and felt confident I had what I needed to beat my own record from the previous year.

For 2026, I grew my own seed, the 2209 Monin from the previous season, inside my 30 x 64-foot greenhouse. I also took water management to an extreme. Basically, no water touched the leaves during the entire growing season. All water and nutrients were delivered through drip tape. The only times the foliage got wet were during occasional fungicide and insecticide applications.



My greenhouse soil was definitely kept drier than what I think most growers would feel comfortable with. I believe keeping the growing environment dry played a major role in maintaining plant health and keeping disease pressure under control.

Growing on Scales Was a Game Changer

Another big change in 2026 was growing on scales for the first time. This turned out to be a game changer for me.

I monitored the weight daily and kept good notes throughout the season. Being able to watch the weight increase in real time allowed me to see whether the things I was doing were helping or hurting growth. I would adjust my watering and feeding schedules based on what the scale was telling me rather than simply following a predetermined schedule.

Having that kind of feedback took a lot of the guesswork out of managing the plant. I could make adjustments based on how the pumpkin was actually responding.

Greenhouse Management in a Hot and Humid Climate

My greenhouse is 30 x 64 feet, and one thing I consider a must is proper air circulation. I have a large exhaust fan on one end and two large circulation fans positioned on each end of the greenhouse. I also have six-foot roll-up sides, which I consider essential for greenhouse growing in my hot and humid environment.

I use 30% shade cloth over the greenhouse throughout the entire season. This significantly reduces the heat inside, especially when combined with proper air circulation and ventilation.

The 2026 season really tested the greenhouse setup. We had close to 50 days over 90 degrees, with multiple days over 100 degrees. Managing those temperatures while maintaining a dry growing environment was important.

What Led to the Leap? - cont



Two Other Practices I've Stuck With

There are two other things I've been doing for several seasons now that I believe have contributed to my recent success.

First, I do not bury any vines in my patch. I get good secondary root development without burying them, and in my opinion, the less soil contact I have with the vines, the less opportunity there is for disease problems.

Second, I deadhead the main vine at the pumpkin. This means all leaves and vines in the growing area are 100% behind the pumpkin. It's a practice I've continued to believe in as part of my overall plant management program.

The Results: 2,481 Pounds at DAP 113

The 2026 season was the culmination of everything I had learned over the previous few years. Growing my own 2209 Monin seed, having my greenhouse setup figured out, controlling water, monitoring daily weights, and making adjustments along the way all came together.

My 2,481-pound pumpkin made it to DAP 113. That was the longest I've ever kept a pumpkin growing, and nearly double the growing days of my previous 1,508-pound personal best, which stopped at DAP 62.

When I look back, I don't think there was one magic change that took me from 1,508 to 2,481 pounds. It was a change in mindset. I had to stop focusing so much on how big I could grow a pumpkin in a short period of time and start focusing on how long I could keep a healthy plant growing.

Final Thoughts

If there's one thing I would tell other growers, it's this: **If you control the water, you can grow a big pumpkin.**

For me, controlling the water meant more than just how much I applied. It meant keeping rain off the plant, delivering water and nutrients through drip irrigation, maintaining a drier growing environment, and making sure I had enough air movement to manage heat and humidity.

I spent years trying to figure out how to grow bigger pumpkins when what I really needed to figure out was how to keep the plant healthy long enough to grow one.

Going from 1,508 pounds to 2,209 pounds and then 2,481 pounds has completely changed the way I approach growing. I'm still learning, but I believe controlling the growing environment and putting plant health first have made all the difference.

What Led to the Leap? - cont

Editors Note:
Every once in a while, someone contributes something to this hobby that immediately stands out as special. Not because of a record weight, a championship, or a world class achievement, but because of the sheer effort invested in sharing knowledge with others.

The following article from **Peter Holst Olsen (1991 to 2641 - Danish and Nordic record)** is one of those contributions.



At ten fully packed pages, it is two to three times longer than what most readers expect to see in a giant pumpkin article. A quick glance might even make some think, *"I'll read that later."* **My advice is simple: don't skip it.**

- Read it.
- Then read it again.
- Take notes.
- Study the data.
- Challenge your own assumptions

Peter doesn't just tell us what worked. He walks us through what failed, what he misunderstood, what he corrected, what he is still trying to understand, and how he uses both success and failure to shape his decisions. He shares observations, measurements, mistakes, theories, compiled data, and lessons learned with a level of transparency that is remarkable.

Quite honestly, this may be one of the most thoughtfully constructed information-sharing articles I have read in a very long time in our hobby.

What makes it especially powerful is that it is not presented as a definitive answer key. Instead, it is a **detailed case study** from a grower who constantly asks questions, records everything, tests assumptions, and is willing to show the rest of us both the victories and the setbacks. Whether you agree with every conclusion or not is beside the point. One of the greatest values lies in seeing how an elite grower thinks through problems and uses data to make decisions.

I know I will personally read this article several times over the coming months. I'll highlight sections, take notes, compare his observations to my own growing experiences, discuss them among peers and undoubtedly discover something new each time I revisit it. My hope is that you will do the same.

This article is not difficult to read, but it does require something increasingly rare in today's world: time and attention. I believe those who invest both will be rewarded. Whether you are chasing your first four-digit pumpkin, your first 2,000-pounder, or trying to understand what separates good growers from great ones, there is something in the following pages worth considering.

- Set aside the time.
- Read it carefully.
- Then think about what it might mean for your own patch.
- And most of all a HUGE THANK YOU to Peter for sharing with us!

Cecil Weston

Giga Greta: What Changed Between 1,991 and 2,641 lb

by Peter Holst Olsen · November 2026

How I fixed what broke in 2025 and how Greta made the fastest start I have ever had

This October at Tivoli Gardens in Copenhagen, my pumpkin **Giga Greta** weighed 2,641.14 lb (1,198.0 kg). That is a new Danish and Nordic record, and my third Danish championship in a row. This is also 649 lb more than my 2025 pumpkin (P/DOOM) at 1,991.9 lb.
It is also 181 lb more than my previous personal best, Wolfenstein at 2,459.9 lb (former record).

The road to that new record was not a straight line; it included a 468 lb step backwards in 2025.

If you don't know me, my name is Peter Holst Olsen, and I grow ONE competition Atlantic Giant a year near Næstved in the southern part of Denmark. That is about 55° north, roughly the latitude of Ketchikan, Alaska. So cool nights and early autumn darkness are something we have to deal with. It means that I have to grow under cover in a greenhouse to be competitive, and with just a single plant each year it really is all my eggs in one basket.

Cecil has asked me what I changed between last year and this. I want to expand this to include all my seasons, as we learn both from our successes and failures. Even a record can hide a long list of things that went wrong.
I record EVERYTHING and I try to learn from both the bad seasons as well as the good ones, and ALL three of my last seasons are shaping my plans for 2027. Greta did not outgrow Wolfenstein at every stage. She built a huge lead in her first 30 days, gave much of it back between DAP 30 and 70, and still finished ahead. Greta finished about 5% heavy against the 2025 GPC chart **and heavy, as we all know, is the prettiest color of them all :)**

This truly amazing start, followed by a very weak middle makes me want to learn from both periods!

Season and pumpkin	Seed grown × pollinator	Official weight	Pollinated / official weigh-off
2024 Wolfenstein	2319.3 Stockl x self	2459.9 lb 1115.8kg	28 May / 12 October DAP 137
2025 P/DOOM	2459.9 Olsen x self	1991.9 lb 903.5 kg	17 May / 4 October DAP 130
2026 Giga Greta	2731.5 Stelts x self	2641.14 lb 1198.0 kg	25 May / 3 October DAP 131

All pumpkins were cut the day before weigh-off

Since 2025 I have been growing on a scale, which lets me follow changes much better than a tape measure allows.

I still have to check the scale for drift, handling effects and tension/tension-release effects from the vine. This is very important when we try to determine cause and effect on a day-to-day or week-to-week basis.

2024: Wolfenstein, a strong middle on a tiring plant

Wolfenstein brought my first Danish championship and a new Danish and Nordic record at 2,459.9 lb. Cold nights, high salt levels, a small greenhouse footprint and a plant eventually devastated by aphids were hardly ideal, yet she still grew into a very big pumpkin.
This particular season made me appreciate how wide a range of conditions these fruits seem able to grow in.

What stands out most was the consistently very low VPD we had. The relative humidity stayed around 85–99% almost constantly, including during the day, across temperatures of roughly 57–90°F (14–32°C). There was only little ventilation and condensation built up heavily inside the plastic tarp. I suspect that the low drying stress environment helped explain how well Wolfenstein performed despite the other problems, particularly during her strong middle season period.

- **A cold start, followed by a strong middle.**
  Most nights in the first three weeks after pollination fell below 57°F (14°C). I strongly suspect those cold nights held back the start: Wolfenstein had an estimated 69 lb weight at DAP 20. Then she picked up, averaging roughly 55 lb a day during DAP 30–40. That strong middle would become a useful comparison in later seasons. The biggest lesson learned is that we really need the nights to be warmer than this, especially during cell division.
- **New leaves helped carry a badly damaged plant.**
  By DAP 100, roughly 80% of the foliage formed before pollination had died. Aphids had devastated the plant. I let selected tertiary vines fill in the gaps. The aphids attacked those too, but had less time to destroy the new leaves. That replacement growth appeared to help keep Wolfenstein going.
  She was still adding an estimated 3-4 lb a day during DAP 110-120.
- **I had put in too much fertilizer and watered too shallowly.**
  Heavy pre-season amendments, followed by frequent shallow waterings multiple times a day with concentrated feed, allowed salts to build up. We reduced fertigation and flushed the soil mid-season trying to mitigate this. I cannot say whether that improved growth, but the salts absolutely needed addressing. I learned to look beyond a carefully crafted recipe/plan and account for what was actually happening in the soil and measure how deeply the waterings would reach.
- **I overdid the foliar feeding.**
  I was spraying foliar feedings three or four times a week to bring up elements reported low by sap tests. I now suspect that this added to the early leaf decline.
  I have since then begun questioning whether the lab's targets for sap contents fit Atlantic Giant pumpkins and how much confidence we should put in samples that has spent several days in transit as this can corrupt the results.
  I recommend that instead of chasing low sap-readings with more foliar spray, we should make sure that the lab sap-targets are based in the specific crop and that the sample handling are appropriate. More spraying is not always the answer!
  The plant needed more room, and I needed warmer nights.
  The 775 sq ft (72 m²) greenhouse was about 95% full by DAP 20. There was little space left to work with, and the plastic tarp lost too much heat on cold nights.
  For 2025, I moved to a larger, insulated polycarbonate greenhouse: 1,100 sq ft (102 m²). I expected that to solve two obvious problems but It also gave me a lot of new ones to learn/worry about.

2025: P/DOOM, the year I went backwards

I went into 2025 with more room in a new greenhouse with much better insulation and even HIGHER expectations.

The warmer nights seemed to pay off: P/DOOM reached about 124 lb on the scale at DAP 20, against Wolfenstein's estimated 69 lb.
But managing the soil, water and climate proved much harder than I expected. At the same time, intensive drip feeding, amino acids and frequent foliar applications meant I was changing too many things at once and I was simply trying too hard (yes, that is possible!).
P/DOOM did still win the Danish and Nordic championships at 1,991.9 lb, but finished light at 11.3% below her tape estimate.
Even with far more knowledge and a much improved greenhouse, **we had gone backwards in weight! Unacceptable!**

- **I went too far down the rabbit hole.**
  About six weeks after sowing, the main growing tip stopped extending and became a cluster of leaves. It did not die or rot. It simply stopped growing normally. I suspect the amino acids were involved, but excess salts in the soil may also have played a part. I cannot separate their effects or pin it on one treatment. I had assembled a huge arsenal of individual amino acid treatments both foliar and in the fertigation. Each of the treatments was extremely carefully timed with scientific evidence behind each. **However,**none of these studies told me what would happen when I combined them all...
  A big mistake on my part. Just because something works good on its own it does not mean that several other good things applied on top of that is better.
  I had made things overly complicated and lost sight of the basics.

  Eventually a secondary vine from node 14 saved the season, although my earlier pruning left less foliage around the fruit.
- **The flush helped, but could not undo the earlier stress.**
  The bed we were growing on had 12 inches of rich topsoil over almost pure sand.
  With frequent and shallow watering, water and salts accumulated in the upper layer.
  The lab's soil EC reading (an indicator of soluble salts) reached 5.3 mS/cm!
  We flushed with about 2,100 US gallons (8,000 litres) of pure low EC water which brought the reading down. I believe that prevented a complete failure.
  By then though, the plant had already been through considerable stress.
- **The timer did not tell me where the water was going.**
  During a routine soil sampling, I pushed my fingers into the ground (yes, you can actually feel the soil with your own hands!!!) and I could feel some areas were wet and some were dry !
  It turned out that calcium deposits had reduced pump pressure, so the **drip lines were no longer pressurized correctly and no longer watered evenly!**
  We cleaned the pump and flushed the lines. It was a useful reminder to get my hands into the bed and check what is actually going on with my own senses.
  Knowing and measuring how much water entered the greenhouse was not enough – **distribution matters!**
  A big reminder to also use your senses and get your head out of the Excel sheet sometimes.
- **Rot took more of an already struggling plant.**
  By DAP 110, we had to remove the crown, about ten feet (3 m) of main vine and roughly a third of

the plant because of rot. Growth declined further as affected leaves and vines came out. Several things were going wrong together, so I cannot separate the pounds lost to rot from those lost to the earlier problems and stress. Since then, I have always kept a fan on the crown and the main.

- **Keeping the house cool meant losing moisture.**
  Ventilation of roughly 1.12–1.5 air changes per minute controlled the daytime heat, but it also carried moisture out of the greenhouse.
  The heavy condensation we had in the old plastic-tarp greenhouse was gone. VPD became MUCH higher, and the plant spent long periods under high drying stress.
  I had made the cold nights warm and easier to manage, but keeping the well-insulated greenhouse both cool and humid during the day was another matter entirely.
- **My cheap "fogging" system mostly just wet the leaves.**
  We tried using a cheap low-pressure "fogging" system to bring down the VPD.
  To the human eye the droplets looked real tiny, but they landed and accumulated on the nearby canopy before it could evaporate. We had to remove the system again before leaf damage and disease would take hold.
  With so little distance between the nozzles and leaves, I needed much finer droplets.
  This has pointed me toward a proper wet-wall with a combination of a high-pressure fogging system, which I did not have at the time.
- **The scale showed a problem I could not yet fix.**
  This was my first season weighing continuously. On the dry afternoons, I could see temporary weight losses instead of the gains I wanted. This has helped me understand how detrimental high VPD can be. But seeing the problem did not give me the tools to solve it in 2025.
  I carried that lesson into the climate changes and tools we needed for 2026.
- **I also took another look at the seed.**
  P/DOOM grew from my selfed 2459.9 Olsen which in turn came from the selfed 2319 Stoeckl.
  So, this was a second-generation selfed descendant of the outstanding 2365 Wolf.
  My deep analysis work has associated selfed seeds with an on average lower offspring weight even when accounting for grower skill and the era in which they were grown.
  This has raised my concerns about repeated selfing, although it does not prove a fixed penalty for individual offspring.
  Some selfed seeds still grow exceptional pumpkins. Genetics may have played a part in my result for 2025, but I cannot separate that from the growing problems.
  The wider analysis also helped me choose the 2731.5 Stelts for 2026. Pretty good call If I should say so myself.

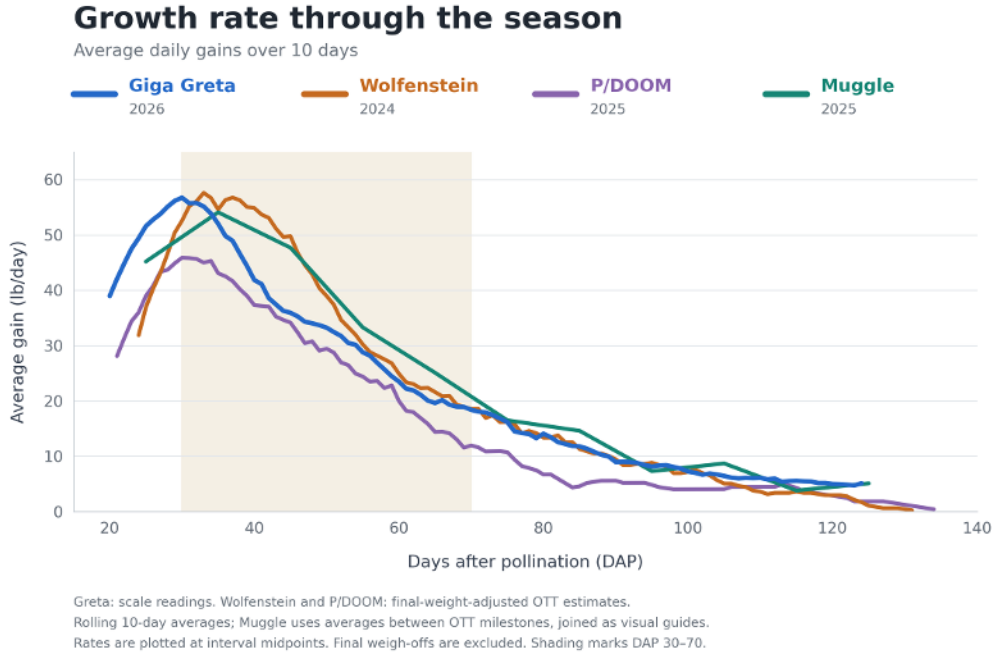
2026: Giga Greta, a record start and a weaker middle

For 2026, I concentrated on fixing the problems that had held P/DOOM back.

I rebuilt the soil and irrigation completely, added tensiometers and installed evaporative coolers. This time, we did not choose blindly on what improvements we had to make.

We managed the salts and we had much better VPD than in 2025 as a result.

Greta reached 238.5 lb at DAP 20 and 754 lb at DAP 30. A pretty awesome start... Then we saw a sharp decline in average gains. We fell from about 52 lb a day during DAP 30–40 to 36 lb during DAP 40–50. This was a MUCH sharper slowdown than we would expect, so even if Greta still has given me a new record we absolutely still have had lots to learn !



Pictured above:Ten-day average daily gains for Giga Greta, Wolfenstein, P/DOOM and Muggle. Greta's and P/DOOMs curves uses scale readings; Wolfenstein and Muggle use OTT estimates adjusted using their final weights.
The shaded DAP 30–70 period shows where Greta gave back much of her early lead over Wolfenstein.

Greta was about 317 lb ahead of Wolfenstein at DAP 30, but only 118 lb ahead at DAP 70.

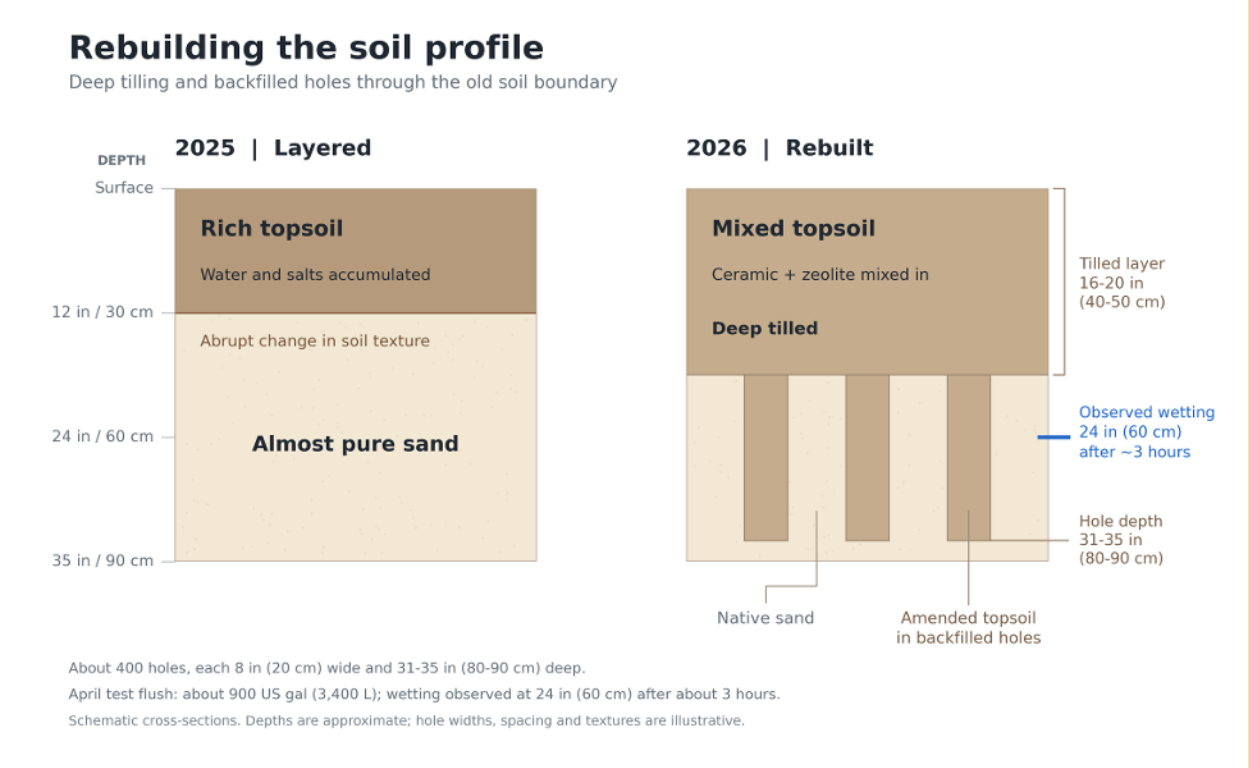
Wolfenstein's tape-based estimates showed higher gains in every ten-day block between those points. The largest gap was during DAP 40–50, when Wolfenstein averaged an estimated 50 lb a day against Greta's measured 36. Even the bad season with P/DOOM nearly matched Greta there.

After DAP 70, Greta's gain rates began to normalize and she had a strong finish. I want to keep this strong start and get more out of those middle weeks. I strongly suspect that the soil running low on nitrogen was a major contributor to Greta's weak middle. The dark spells in July may also have contributed, and I cannot completely separate their effect from the nutrient problems.

The Paton brothers' 2025 world-record pumpkin, the 2,819.3 lb Muggle gives us another useful comparison.
Greta went from about 143 lb ahead at DAP 40 to about 75 lb behind at DAP 70.
Muggle gained roughly 218 lb more during those thirty days, entirely wiping out Greta's early lead.
The difference between their official final weights was 178 lb in Muggles favor
Every single comparison we make keeps pointing me toward problems in the same part of the season.

- **I started by looking below the topsoil.**
  Over winter, I deep-tilled down to 16-20 inches (40-50 cm), adding 2 metric tons of porous ceramic and 1 metric ton of zeolite in an effort to increase the CEC and keep the drainage optimal. We also made about 400 holes, 8 inches (20 cm) wide and 31-35 inches (80-90 cm) deep, and backfilled them with topsoil mixed with amendments. The aim was to break up the sharp boundary between the rich upper layer and the sand below, so water and salts could move through more readily. An April test flush used about 900 US gallons (3,400 litres); after about three hours, we observed wetting at 24 inches (60 cm). That was encouraging to see after the trouble we had with the old soil profile!
- **One longer watering was more even than three short ones.**
  I also installed new pressure-compensating drippers in a dense grid at around 16 drippers per m² (about 1.5 per sq ft) and a disc filter and four pressure gauges. Then I checked delivery with catch cans. One six-minute watering distributed the water a lot more evenly in the patch than three shorter two-minute pulses, despite the same total running time.
  That simple test told me something the timer and absolute amounts of water applied could not: how evenly distributed the water actually was when it reached the bed.

Because of this test, I only watered once a day on average in 2026 to keep the run-time up and to make sure that each watering event would actually push water and salts deeper into the soil than in the previous seasons. Together with the soil-profile rebuild, the longer waterings appeared to help keep salts under better control. The highest in-season EC reading from the soil lab was 3.2, compared with 5.3 in 2025.



Pictured Left: Schematic soil profiles before and after the spring 2026 rebuild, showing deep tilling and holes back filled with amended topsoil.

- **The tensiometers showed differences I had been missing.**
  I also used 10 tensiometer instruments in three areas, at depths of 6–24 inches (15–60 cm). This allowed me to follow how tightly the soil held its water. As a reading rises, the soil is drying and holding the remaining water more tightly. The younger north end dried faster than the middle and crown area, yet all three shared one irrigation program. I did not compensate for that in 2026. *For 2027, I plan three zones, each guided by its own tensiometers.*
  I prefer tensiometers to basic resistance-based moisture meters because they measure actual soil-water tension directly. Those basic resistance-based meters estimate moisture from how easily electricity passes through the soil. Fertilizer salts affect that electrical reading, so a change in salts can look like a change in moisture.
  And since a tensiometer does not rely on EC for its reading, we still check EC separately (we do this by mixing soil with distilled water 1:1 into a soil-slurry mix and we measure this with an EC meter). I have found several direct-to-soil stick EC meters to be VERY unreliable.
- **The feed looked sensible on paper but I fell behind!**
  In 2026, I was trying to follow PPM concentrations in the fertigation used in high-yield greenhouse studies. But as Greta's growth accelerated, soil nitrate-N fell from 35 to 7 mg/L soil in just 13 days, between DAP 14) and DAP 27 and potassium fell too.
  Looking back, that was a warning-shot before the sharp slowdown a bit later.
  The nitrate-N reading recovered to 17 mg/L soil at DAP 41 and was still 17 at DAP 55. Even including ammonium, mineral nitrogen was below 23 mg/L soil in both tests, against the soil lab's reference target of about 80 !
  I had increased the feed too little and too slowly.
  The studies of ppm levels in fertigation water gave me a starting point but we should have responded more clearly to what was happening in my own bed.
  Normal reasonable HIGH ppm-concentration of N and K in the tank did not give us enough

nutrients on a simple mass-basis. A pumpkin and a plant growing this fast in a low EC soil need fertilization in grams and kgs even if this may be above certain general recommendations when it comes to ppm in the fertigation water.

The soil tests showed this clearly.

They could not, however, tell me how much of the decline in the soil came from actual uptake and how much from leaching.

This is something that we will have to investigate during multiple seasons.

This is also highly specific for the soil and drainage present at your own site.

- **Soil tests help us when we compare apples to apples.**

  We have also learned a very important lesson about doing soil tests and looking at numbers from other growers for comparisons.

  I sent the same soil to four different labs, the iron readings ranged from 0.3 to 421 ppm simply because they used different extraction methods!

  This showed me why we need to check the extraction method before comparing soil-test numbers.

  To following changes through a season, using the same laboratory and method helps keep the results consistent and this is critically important to build your own experience base.

  Also when comparing with other growers, first check whether the tests are comparable.

  Iron was just an example; this discrepancy was present for all elements across 4 different labs!

  My well water contains bicarbonate. Sulfuric acid and an automatic pH controller bring the fertigation water to about pH 5.8–6.2 in the tank, but soil pH stayed around 7.4–7.6 all season, thus limiting iron and manganese availability. I therefore use iron in the EDDHA form to keep it plant available and also foliar feed iron and manganese as prevention once a week on average.

  But keeping the pH in the tank in the optimal range has not solved the underlying soil-pH problem. Getting the fertigation pH where I want it is only part of the job.

- **The climate improved, although dry afternoons remained difficult.**

  Nights in 2026 were always around 68–70°F (20–21°C).

  Two evaporative coolers kept the greenhouse below our hard limit at about 90°F (32°C) even when it was 91°F (33°C) outside.

  And during DAP 20–68 the total time above our critical limit for VPD at 1.5 kPa fell from about 50 hours in 2025 to only six hours in 2026. That was a clear improvement owed to the evap coolers.

  Even so, we were still above our targets a lot of the time and the big air-exchange needed to keep the temps down still made humidity hard to hold on to which caused dry afternoons.

  Even though we had fewer extremes than in 2025 we want steadier conditions throughout the day.

  This is especially hard when you have to grow in a HIGHLY reactive shoebox like this greenhouse with a roof only 5–7 feet (1.5–2.1 m) high and very little total air volume!

  Many commercial greenhouses have 10–16 feet (3–5 m) of clearance just to the gutters, with the roof higher still.

  That is WAY more headroom than I am able to provide and more air volume above the crop to help buffer changes. This matters a lot. So if you have the space for it. Go high !

- **Closing the greenhouse also meant watching CO_2.**

  On several sunny June mornings, the CO_2 reading fell from about 1,300 ppm to 400 ppm within two hours. My sensor bottoms out at 400 ppm, so I do not know whether it fell further.

  I wanted to keep warmth and humidity inside, but the plant also needed fresh air.

  My working rule is to prioritize warmth ahead of supplying more fresh air if we have temperature below 73°F (23°C). Above that I am less willing to keep the house closed just to hold heat.

  Temperature, humidity and CO_2 have to be considered together.

- **I tried to make better use of the available light.**
  I removed the shadow cast by rolled-up shade cloth and took out an extra plastic roof layer. I also added four 720 W LEDs—2,880 W altogether—over younger leaves. The polycarbonate already reduces incoming light by 20%. So I did not want to lose more unnecessarily. During two dark spells in July, daily light was around half or even less than what is needed to keep optimal photosynthesis going.
  This was followed clearly in the scale data with weaker gains one or two days later during these dark periods.
  I do shade the fruit itself with white cloth and check it with an infrared thermometer, aiming to keep the skin below about 90°F (32°C). But I no longer actively shade the plant at all.
- **One snap reminded me to handle the vine more carefully.**
  About two weeks before pollination, I heard a snap while moving the main vine on a 68°F (20°C) morning. After that partial break the next four nodes between the injury and fruit never developed side vines. That left gaps in the canopy exactly where I wanted more vines and leaves.
  I cannot tell how much it affected the pumpkin growth. But this serves as a reminder to handle the plant with care !
  Wait for the warmer part of the day, ALWAYS !
  Growing a huge pumpkin is hard enough without damaging the vine myself.
  Rookie mistake on my part!
- **No obvious crown rot, but I was late on pests.**
  A crown fan went in at DAP 26, and this was my first season without obvious crown rot. I also kept functioning older leaves until they were nearly or totally spent. It seems that even if a leaf is no longer actively producing, the plant-system and pumpkin are still able to use the stored resources. So going forward I will not prune bad leaves unless obviously affected by pests.
  By early August, though, mites and thrips did become a serious problem.
  Predatory mites went in on DAP 73 but two weeks later the infestation was even more severe.
  I had again reacted too little, too late. Later other treatments substantially reduced the pests, but they could not repair the already damaged leaves.
  For 2027, I will start scouting more carefully and introducing suitable beneficial predators way earlier. I waited too long.

2027: Keep the start, fix the middle

I want to keep the fast start, respond sooner when something slips, and keep the plant working longer. Three irrigation zones, earlier pest prevention and more careful vine handling follow directly from 2026. Transplanting around April 1 and pollinating in mid-May should give us more growing days and line the season up even better with the summer light. The aim is at least 140 days of fruit growth for 2027.

For the next season I do not want to harvest a pumpkin that is still actively gaining weight.

- **I want the soil tests to prompt action while there is still time.**
  They will be paramount in deciding when to adjust the feed. Roughly every two weeks, I will compare nutrient trends with what I actually applied between samples, the pumpkin's gains and the condition of the plant.
  I want to catch the bed running short before it costs any growth. A falling reading alone cannot tell me exactly how much fertilizer to add or separate plant uptake from leaching. But it can tell me to look more closely and respond sooner and harder than I did with Greta.
  Another big change in my perspective for 2027 comes from how we look at applied nutrients. When we calculate PPM in the fertigation water, it tells me the concentration in the feed water. Counting actual applied grams tells me how much nutrient hit the soil which is what matters.

I will continue to carefully compare my application records with soil tests and the plant's response so we can better provide a nutritional baseline and phase changes for the full season.
At 100 ppm nitrogen solution at 400 litres (about 106 US gallons) supply 40 g of nitrogen.
If you give only 200 litres (about 53 US gallons) at that same concentration and the plant's bed receives 20 g - HALF.
The recipe has not changed, but the amount supplied has halved.
That is why we need both the concentration and the actual water volume applied to calculate what the soil gets.

I have built a very advanced fertigation app that helps me keep track of this through the season. It helps me build a plan around growth stages, the estimated needs of the fruit and the rest of the plant, and the nutrients already in the source water.
Logging the volume of every fertigation lets it calculate how much fertilizer actually went into the soil. It also keeps planned feeding separate from actual recorded applications, so I can see what I intended to give and what actually went in.
As soil tests and other measurements come in, we adjust the plan accordingly.
Do not be a slave to a plan as I have learned.
It is an advanced system, but growing a good pumpkin does not require an app like mine. A simple spreadsheet, or a notebook and calculator, can cover the essentials. Keep records of the water applied and all fertilizer, work out the nutrient grams delivered, and compare those records with consistent your consistent soil tests and the plant's response. That is the useful part to copy.
However, thinking in grams applied to the soil does not mean I can make the tank mix as strong as I like. Too much fertilizer or an incompatible mixture can cause reactions and form insoluble precipitates, taking some nutrients out of solution.
My fertigation app also uses chemical calculations, based on the planned nutrient concentrations and assumed tank pH, to flag potential precipitation problems before I mix a batch.
Those solids can also clog the drippers. So even when I plan my feeding in grams delivered to the soil, I will still check every tank for compatibility, mixing concentration, pH and EC, and watch for unexpected cloudiness, sediment or crystals. Another reason to keep an eye on the pH in the tank!

Period	Air temperature	Air VPD	Approximate RH
Day	77–81°F / 25–27°C	0.60–0.90 kPa	72–83%
Night	68–72°F / 20–22°C	0.25–0.40 kPa	83–91%

Good pH and EC readings alone do not guarantee a compatible mixture. I want the nutrients to stay dissolved and reach the soil in a plant-available form. I cannot count on precipitated nutrients becoming available when the plant needs them.

- **I want a steadier climate, with controlled transitions.**
  After several in-depth analyses of the scale and climate records, we found that some more humid periods were associated with stronger short-term gains. It remains unclear whether that short-term advantage translates into lasting gains over the following day or two. The analyses have not yet fully established an optimum VPD range. These are therefore my starting operating targets for 2027, to be adjusted as I learn more.
  I have included RH to make the VPD targets easier to picture. The exact RH depends on the temperature and VPD together: at 79°F (26°C), a VPD of 0.75 kPa means approximately 78% RH. The ranges in the table cover the different combinations.
  Just as important is how I move between day and night. I want gradual warming as morning light increases and gradual cooling toward night, with heating, ventilation, cooling and humidification working together. A good daily average can hide several hours of drying stress or abrupt changes.
  My home-made app will help me bring the climate measurements and controls together.

Better humidity control should make afternoon drying stress easier to manage, while I watch for condensation on the leaves and fruit. The aim is to hold the useful conditions steadily, not spend the day chasing up/down all the time.

- **The growth curve should give me another early warning.**
  I will watch daily gains closely again in 2027 with several important checkpoints.
  At DAP 50, one checkpoint will be to compare the DAP 40–50 average with the DAP 30–40 average.
  An unexpectedly sharp decline would send me back through the water delivery, soil results, climate and plant health to look for a reason. It does not automatically mean more fertilizer is needed.
  Acting sooner still comes with my other rule: do not do anything stupid. Several of my worst mistakes have been rushed reactions, both in life and in growing pumpkins ;)
- **I want to know whether the mycorrhizal products establish.**
  We did a very careful lab test on the 2026 plants root system and found no mycorrhizal colonization in three late-season root samples. This was despite several product applications during the entire season. Three samples cannot speak for the whole root system, but they were enough to make me investigate.
  I do not yet know why no colonization was detected in those samples. I had also used other root-zone biological treatments, including Trichoderma, so I cannot judge the mycorrhizal products in isolation.
  Because of the disappointment of not finding AMF in my plants roots this year I have decided to do a real scientific experiment with 30 Atlantic Giant seedlings, comparing four treatments and a control without added inoculant. These plants have now been harvested, and coded root samples submitted to two labs without revealing the treatments.
  This has cost me WAY more money and time than any inoculants would for the next 10 years. So on an individual level perhaps not the best investment.
  I'll share the results in a separate article once the analysis is complete, whatever they show; an unexciting result is still worth knowing.

Thanks and a last word

Three seasons have given me a lot of data and a baseline to build on. I know that not all growers measure and log everything as extensively as I do, but I do think this is a very important part of what has allowed me to be somewhat successful as a new grower.

So, to answer Cecil: in 2026 I rebuilt the soil and irrigation and improved the climate to address the problems that had held P/DOOM back. I believe those changes helped Greta get off to such a strong start. I changed several things at once, so I cannot divide her extra pounds between them. The next challenge is to repeat that start and keep growth stronger through the middle weeks by responding sooner when the soil tests, growth curve or plant tell me something is slipping.

Thank you to all who share seeds, data and advice! Sharing failures as openly as personal bests is how I have learned from many other growers.

I hope we can all share more openly -- our methods, our measurements, our successes and our mistakes.

We should want everyone in this hobby to succeed.

There is no room for petty envy or keeping useful knowledge secret. If another grower achieves something great because you helped them, that is something to be proud of! Their success gives us something new to learn from.

Let's help each other, learn from each other and rise together.

And if the world record doesn't come to Denmark next year, I have my excuse ready for you here: insufficient Scandinavian photons.

NO secrets. NO BS.

Peter Holst Olsen, Næstved, Denmark. November 2026

2026 Half Moon Bay's Five-Time Winner: Travis Gienger Continues a Legacy of Giant Pumpkin Excellence

By Cecil Weston



Some growers spend an entire career hoping to win at Half Moon Bay just once.

For Travis Gienger of Anoka, Minnesota, the 2026 Safeway World Championship Pumpkin Weigh-Off added yet another chapter to an already remarkable legacy. Gienger captured his fifth Half Moon Bay championship with a massive 2,389 pound pumpkin, further cementing his place among the most accomplished giant pumpkin growers in history.

Held annually on the California coast, the “Safeway World Championship Pumpkin Weigh-Off” has long been regarded as a premier event in competitive giant pumpkin growing. For more than five decades, the event's large purse has attracted many of the sport's top growers, making a victory at Half Moon Bay a coveted accomplishment in the pumpkin world.



Gienger is no stranger to the winner's circle.

His 2026 championship adds to previous Half Moon Bay victories in 2020, 2022, 2023, and 2024, giving him five titles at one of the sport's most recognized weigh-offs. Sustaining that level of success over multiple seasons is extraordinarily difficult in a hobby where weather, disease pressure, pollination, and simple bad luck can derail months of work.

This year's winning pumpkin measured an impressive 501 inches OTT (Over the Top), one of only 5 that surpassed 500 inches weighed at GPC weigh-offs this season.

2026 Half Moon Bay's Five-Time Winner - Cont



Of course, one outstanding pumpkin does not define Gienger's career.

In 2023, he rewrote the record books by growing a 2,749 pound pumpkin, establishing a new world record. His list of accomplishments also includes pumpkins weighing 2,560 pounds in 2022, 2,471 pounds in 2024, and 2,350 pounds in 2020.

As an instructor of horticulture and landscape technology at Anoka Technical College, Gienger has built a reputation for combining elite genetics, careful plant management, and years of experience into world-class results.





His success is a reminder that giant pumpkin growing is far more than planting a seed and hoping for the best. Behind every championship pumpkin are months of planning, countless hours of care, and an unwavering commitment to the craft.

The 2,389 pound pumpkin may not have challenged the world record, but the real story is consistency. Year after year, Travis Gienger continues to produce pumpkins capable of winning the biggest stages in the sport.

Woody's Swan Song

by Woody Lancaster



As a child from a large family in rural Ohio we gardened out of necessity it felt like forced labor to me and I hated it.

Fast forward to a family of my own, I taught my children the joy of growing your own food. Willingly experiencing the joy of backyard gardening.

31 years ago my then seven year old son talked me into growing Atlantic Giants we had seen at the Topsfield Fair. We grew a pumpkin weighing around 425#. At that time 700# pumpkins were winning the weigh-offs. I was hooked for life -- he eventually outgrew it.

At that time everything was communicated the old fashioned way, in person and a occasional news article. I had found a group of like minded individuals in the giant pumpkin community -- my kind of people.



My search for knowledge lead me to volunteer in my local club, the New England Giant Pumpkin Growers Association. Hugh Wiberg ran the competition for the Topsfield Fair. As the only show in town we would get 130 entries on average. Today with all the weigh-offs that have emerged we average around 35. I was asked to be Club Treasurer, the position I held till this year when someone will step up to take my place.

Asking questions listening and understanding the answers was key to getting the inside scoop. **A well respected grower told me I would go far as I knew how to listen.** Taking that to heart the next weigh-off found me pen in hand taking notes as I shadowed one of the top growers as he talked about his season and answered questions. Later when I reviewed my collected intel I found different answers to the very same question. You needed to be in the inner circle to get reliable how-to details as most growers held their cards close to the vest.



A few years in, I was lucky enough to grow one close to 1000#. That was the goal back then as only a few growers had reached that milestone. That was all I needed to get my competitive juices flowing. Every year thereafter I grew for a world record, all I needed was a little luck. I soon learned there was more to it than that.

As many years went by I witnessed the 1500 and 2000 pound milestones broken by Ron Wallace.



Fast forward to 2017 I grew my 2003.5. Ron congratulated me and offered the following words of encouragement. Now you know you can do it, **Go For It!**

I feel blessed to have grown in an area with so many great growers to learn from. We are very competitive but realize that our greatest asset is our spirit of camaraderie and friendship.

In 2018 with the backing of most of the N.E. Region, I was picked from a pool of one as the GPC Rep. Available to help where requested and support where needed. **Time to pay it forward!** Having been involved in pumpkin politics at a club level, I knew it wasn't going to be easy. I always viewed our community as a small example of our larger society. As pumpkin growers are the Salt of the Earth I believed we did not have the same problems that other governing bodies were plagued with. That bubble quickly burst. I have been fortunate enough to have the backing of my region but have witnessed some of the same problems governing bodies face in our Society. Divisions, factions formed, past administrations critical of present and friendships lost. Come on people we are better than that and can do better.

A few years ago I announced to all that would listen my plans to stop spending my summers as a indentured servant to Giant Pumpkins when I turned 80. **This being my last year I wanted go out with a bang. Mission accomplished!**

2026 Goals and Actual Dreams were as follows:

1. Always grow for a World Record. My way of pushing myself.
2. Win Topsfield with a Fair record, State record, New England Record. **Check**
3. Take second place at Frerich's Farm in R.I. Why not first place you ask? Lets be honest I knew what Ron had, and it showed up. **Check**
4. Win the 10K drawing at Topsfield, which had never been done before. **Check**
5. Grow a personal best. Make that Two! **Check**
6. Do this surrounded by family and friends at my home weigh-off. **Check**



Five out of Six who could ask for more! The icing on the cake this season was witnessing Ron Wallace set a new World Record of 3156 lbs. Well deserved! Great grower and a great human being!

During my 31 years I have witnessed many changes in our hobby

Some good some bad. You be the judge. Food for thought.

1. Social Media, Great for sharing info. All to often used for negative comments and airing grievances
2. Seed trading and freely giving seeds. No one sold seed with the exception of Clubs Auctions and Sales. All to further the growth of our hobby. Seems to be shifting to how to monetize and maximize profit. Growers have advertised seeds for sale that have not been harvested from their pumpkin. It can be an expensive hobby but when it's for the quest of the almighty dollar me thinks we are missing something.
3. Growing methods are constantly evolving and information sharing has never been better. Still room for improvement with sharing.
4. More Scientific Studies are being done than ever before. Sky's the limit!
5. Let's not forget Camaraderie is our greatest asset.

How did I Go from a Personal Best of 2116 to 2598

We all use pretty much the same amendments but our patches are all different. What works for one doesn't always work for all. I think how I went about my grow this year is more important than what I did to balance my soil and details on what I feed, etc. We all spend quite a bit growing these giants and it's important to use quality products. I rely on and trust Wallace Organic Wonders for the best products and advice. Ron only sells what he believes in.



1. Knowing this to be m last year I gave it my all. Max effort in equals Max rewards.
2. I pushed Boron. I knew from past experience and testing how much of a Boron product to use to increase my Boron. I knew it could be toxic. I added Boron to my daily feeding until at around DAP 30 new growth on one of my plants was stunted. I stopped adding Boron, tested soil salinity which was fine at .8 on on my EC meter. A tissue test was sent to Western Labs it showed Boron at 107. Their range was 24 - 70. After 2 weeks of feeding and watering as new growth returned to normal, I went back to adding Boron daily with no further issues. I haven't sent my fall soil test in yet but from past experience I expect it to be around 4 to 6. By spring it will be leached out enough for the young plant to handle it. I don't recommend this no guts no glory approach but it worked for me.
3. Feed daily by hand held hose always before the sun was on the patch. Amendments were mixed in a 50 gal. barrel and washed of with 50 - 100 gal. of clean water. City water was used from open topped barrels after off gassing for 24 hrs. to remove Chlorine. EC readings were .8 - 2.0.
4. I have great drainage and kept my patch wetter than normal. Two day's after a 2" rain I was watering again. There were only a few days this year that it was too wet to feed. My soil surface always looked like it had rained recently. I never let it dry out.
5. I minimized fungicide and pesticide sprays. Using Compost Tea, Actinovate, Companion, and yes Milk as a preventative for Foliar Disease. I only sprayed systemic fungicide 3 times as a curative. Pesticide was used sparingly and only when needed due to insect pressure.
6. Did succession cover crop planting and tilling to keep the soil microorganisms working.
7. Added Biological soil amendments to enhance beneficial microorganisms.
8. Believed in myself and let the plants know what I expected of them. Ya we talked.

I want to thank all of you for sharing your knowledge and your support. My take away from the last 31 years as part of this Hobby. I believe this experience has shaped me into a better person and I hope you all have the same experience. Learn something everyday, treat each other with respect and there is no limit to what you can achieve. May your experience be as rewarding as mine.

Sincerely Woody Lancaster

2027 International Growers Convention

The GPC is pleased to announce that the next International Growers Convention will be held in Canfield, Ohio, on March 5–7, 2027.

We extend our thanks to the Ohio Valley Giant Pumpkin Growers club for their outstanding proposal to host the event in their home state.

If you are planning on getting a Black Friday flight deal, be aware that the best airports to fly into are Cleveland or Pittsburgh. They're both the same distance to Canfield, so shop with your favorite airline carrier for the best fare.

More details will be shared in late fall 2026—stay tuned!









2027 GPC Hall of Fame Nominations



The criteria requirements are listed below in the order of importance and should reflect more positively to candidates who are and have been leaders in the overall running of clubs and the building of our great hobby.

✓ Club/GPC participation (must have taken a leadership role for 5 years or more at a club, GPC site coordinator, Executive Committee Member, or similar roles). The nominee should have demonstrated a high level of integrity, selflessness and ethical conduct throughout their history.

✓ Generosity of time and seeds and knowledge (must have given freely of his/her time to the betterment of this hobby including public speaking, seed donations and volunteering at any level, organizing events, etc.).

✓ Number of awards won during career (must have won 5 local/regional GPC sanctioned events, bonus for regional & world records in any of the GPC categories.

✓ Number of years growing (must have been an active grower for at least 10 years documented by entries at GPC weigh-off sites). To be eligible, a person must meet at least 75% (3 out of 4), of the above criteria.

Nominations that do not meet the above criteria's will not be accepted.

Scope

❖ Nominations for the HOF will be submitted by Regions. GPC Area Representatives will be communicating to all clubs who in turn are advised to communicate with other clubs in their Region to determine a worthy nominee for their area. Currently, the GPC consists of 10 regions. Any nomination submitted must come from within their Region.

❖ Club presidents will submit the nominee along with a bio to their GPC Regional Committee Rep. If they can't agree on just one, the Committee will accept up to two

2027 GPC Hall of Fame Nominations

per Region, but only one will move forward for consideration per region. GPC Reps will both work with and help oversee these nominations in their Regions. This will help ensure the worthiness of these nominations to be on the ballot. Nominations that do not meet the above criteria will not be accepted.

❖ HOF members from the nominee's region may be consulted as part of the vetting process.

❖ Voting on nomination acceptance and ballots will be done by the GPC Committee with open voting during our online GPC meetings. The Committee feels that all Regions have the right to nominate any grower who they believe is worthy of this great honor, from within their region, the only exception would be sitting current GPC Committee members, they are not eligible.

This year the Committee will be seeking to induct 1 or 2 new members into the HOF. It is recommended the length of BIO's submitted by the regions be no longer than 3 pages. 2 to 3 pages should be ample space to list the grower's attributes for the nomination ballot.

The deadline for receiving the nomination is December 1 of each year.



GPC News from President Cindy





Greetings fellow growers, and happy fall! What an EPIC growing season so many of us experienced! I had the proverbial "The one that got away" this summer with a very heavy 1980 pounder that split on day 60 (pictured). Of course, I was dreaming of that state record that was going to be within reach by day 67, and another Half Moon Bay win. So it was a pretty sad day after "counting my chickens" so to speak to see that blossom end split, but what a thrilling ride while it lasted! It seems like there were a lot of splits this year, and I figured I'd help to console my fellow mourners with my Giant Pumpkin Distress Hot Line. If you didn't have to call it this year, consider yourself lucky; if you did make the call, I hope the message and the chance to vent put a smile on your face!

I attended so many weighoffs this year, and it was validating to see across the USA trained and certified GPC judges performing with such a great degree of CONSISTENCY! I was able to attend events and help out in 4 different states from the east coast to the west coast and worked as a judge at two of the most prestigious events in the world: The Topsfield Fair in Massachusetts, and Safeway World Pumpkin Championship in Half Moon Bay, California. In both of those instances, every member of the judging team was trained and certified, and what a difference that made! We were all on the same-page and well-versed in the rule book, which really helped facilitate making decisions in a timely manner that we could all stand behind. One thing the GPC committee noticed as a result of the judges assessment were a number of rules that could use more clear language. Expect some needed clean-up before next year's training module. With so many judges and exhibitors tuned into the rules, we noticed that weighoffs ran so much more smoothly this year! There were two areas we will need to emphasize for improvement next year: one is a greater emphasis for judges to have the grower present when probing a suspect spot. The other will be safety of people when there is a a soft spot UNDER a pumpkin. NOTHING is more important that the safety of those involved in handling these enormous fruit, and the committee will be making a rule change to address that for 2027's weighoffs.

The committee and I have been working hard to get ready for the next International Growers' Convention in Canfield, Ohio the first weekend of March! Part of that work lies with Jacob Marintzer to go through the data the GPC Leaderboard program gleans off of the site results posted on Bigpumpkins.com. It is a time-consuming task, and he works so hard to make sure we account for everyone who is eligible for a year-end prize. After Jacob does his work, then he

GPC News from President Cindy

hands it to Mark Mourlas who does his double-check. I am so grateful for these two board members who have the technical expertise to get this important job done! One way you can help is to check on the GPC website under the Leaderboard tab to make sure you are listed if you know you are earning a jacket or other prize. With different sites spelling growers' or team names differently, it is easy to miss someone.

On December 1st, we will open up the hotel and convention registration for everyone. I anticipate that this will be the most well-attended convention EVER, and you are not going to want to miss this year's lineup of speakers; it is truly the BEST group we have ever assembled. Watch for the big announcement on December 1st with the full schedule of events. Also be on the lookout for some upcoming videos that I made in Ohio to showcase all of the fun things to do there besides the convention! 2026 is in Ohio, then the following year we will all travel to Europe!

The GPC is committed to a 4-year rotation for hosting the International Growers Convention. We had two European clubs step up as potential hosts for the Big Show in 2028. At our last meeting, the committee voted on the country, and we're signing the hotel contract for.....



More information will be coming, and Patrik, Luca and the rest of the German club will have an exciting presentation at the IGC in Ohio to get everyone ready! But I figured we'd better let you know now, so you can save up your money, and your vacation time and plan to join us in Bavaria!

-Cindy Tobeck, President

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Andy Wolf 2449

"If you want to be the best, you have to use the best."

-Ian & Stuart Paton

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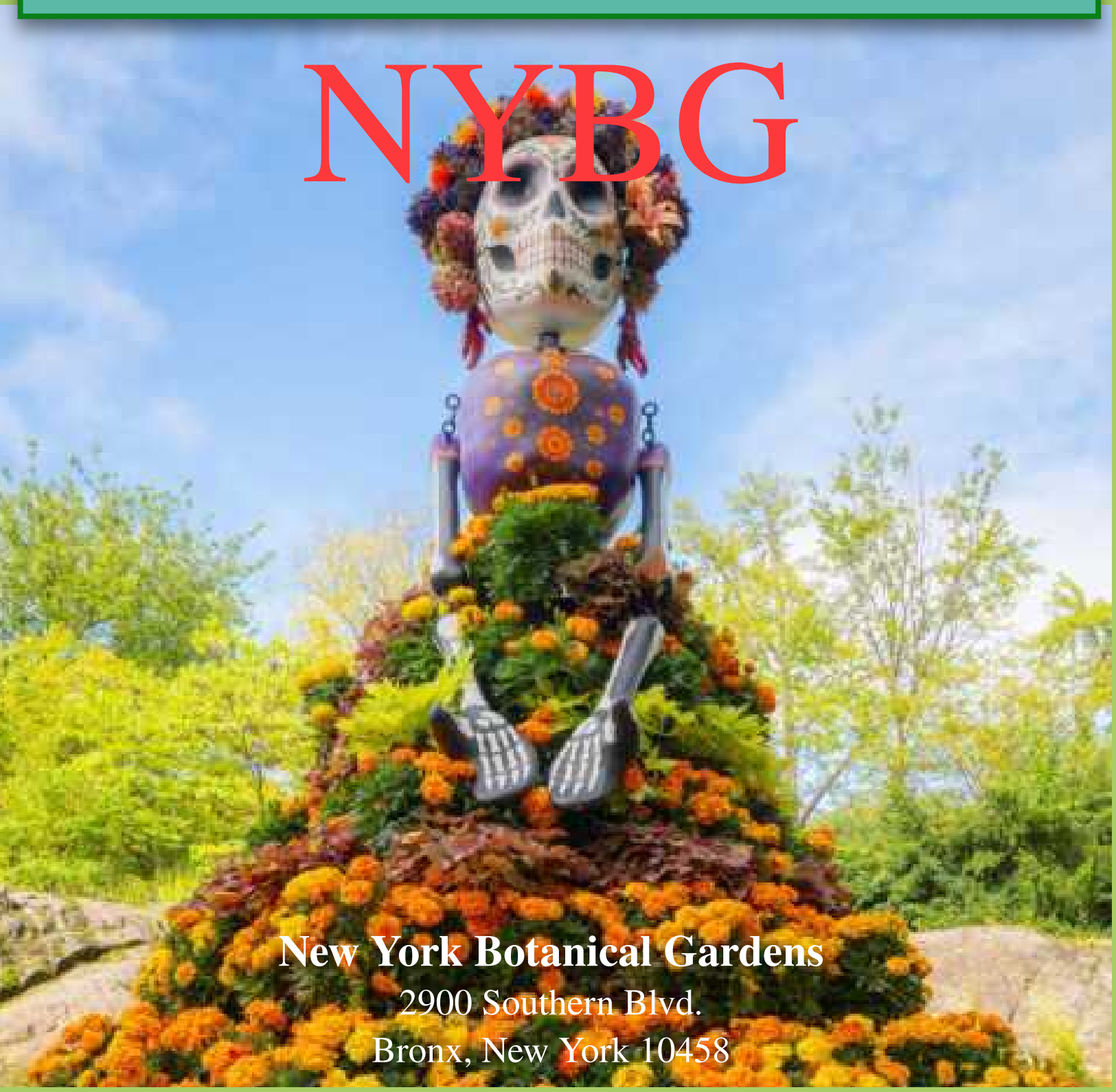
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SUBMIT ARTICLES TO THE GPC COMMON GROUND!

Thank you for reading Edition 31 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.

Got a story to share? We'd love to feature your tips, experiences, products used, successes or even lessons learned while growing giant fruits and vegetables! Whether it's a quick growing hack, or a full article, your contribution helps inspire growers worldwide. GPC Common Ground will be by growers, for growers, so I need your input. **The time to submit for the next edition is now. Accepting all document types, plain text or in a Doc format preferred, but I can usually get what I need from pdfs too.**

GPC Common Ground will be published four times per year and posted on the GPC website:. Archived newsletters are also available at **http://www.gpc1.org/newsletter**

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

Cecil Weston: cntryboy764@gmail.com

As another growing season comes to a close, it is amazing to look back on everything that was accomplished across the giant fruit and vegetable community. This year brought new world, state and national records, countless personal bests, and plenty of stories that remind us why we all keep coming back season after season. While the record-breaking pumpkins often grab the headlines, every grower who planted a seed, shared a tip, helped at a weigh-off, or welcomed a newcomer played a part in making this year special.

One of the things I enjoy most about putting together The GPC Common Ground is seeing how connected this community really is. The articles, photos, and stories in these pages come from people spread across the globe, yet we all share the same excitement when a pumpkin gains 20-70 pounds in a day or when a grower reaches a long-awaited milestone.

As we move into the off-season, I encourage everyone to stay involved, share what you've learned, and continue supporting one another. The friendships and knowledge we build between seasons are just as important as what happens in the patch. Thank you to everyone who contributed to this issue and throughout the year. I hope you enjoy this edition of Common Ground, and I look forward to seeing what we can accomplish together next season.

Cecil Weston