

Fall, 2023



GPC Common Ground

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

The GPC Travels to BELGIUM in February

Famous for waffles, beer, fries, chocolate...and GIANT PUMPKINS!

By: Cindy Tobeck

The Kasterlee giant pumpkin growers are proudly hosting the International Growers Convention February 16-18, 2024.

Belgium is a small, densely populated country in northwestern Europe, situated between The Netherlands, to the north, and France to the south. It consists of lowlands, and borders the North Sea. Most people speak French or Dutch as their primary language, but the majority are bilingual, speaking English as well.

As with all of the previous International Growers Conventions, otherwise known as the "IGC", the Kasterlee event will have opportunities for a city tour as well as a chance to learn about local attractions (a beer tasting is being tentatively planned) on Thursday and Friday. Then Friday evening, registration will open with a chance to mingle. Saturday will be full of information with several speakers. Saturday evening will be the annual awards banquet honoring the best growers in the world for 2023 with trophies, plaques, jackets and patches, followed by more educational talks then wrapping up with the annual seed raffles on Sunday.

Right now it is surprisingly VERY inexpensive to fly to Europe in February; check the fares, and join us in beautiful Belgium! Fly into either Antwerp (From Europe) or Brussels (for international flights). From Brussels, it is easy to take the Intercity Train to Antwerp for 1 hour, then transfer to the Turnhout train to Kasterlee for an additional hour. Once in Kasterlee, one can get an Uber or taxi for a 10 minute ride to the hotel area.

The Kasterlee hotels are smaller, and nearby the event venue, some within walking distance. The Kasterlee growers club will be arranging for rides to the event venue each day. Check out the GPC website for booking information, including discounts. Three host hotels include: Corsendonk Hotels, Turnhout; Motel Cleo, Kasterlee; and Hostel Wadi, Kasterlee.

Go to www.gpc1.org to register for the IGC. The cost of the full seminar is \$160 USD which includes the event t shirt with the 2024 logo and meals throughout the seminar including the Saturday night awards banquet.

Keep checking back on the website for updates including planned outings and the agenda!

1. Visit the Statue Manneken Pis in Brussels. This iconic statue is a favorite with tourists. The beloved bronze fountain is of a little boy...ummmm....peeing....and his name translated is: "Little Peeing Man". People from all over the world send him outfits, which he is clothed in, then many of those make their way to the nearby Manneken Pis Museum. The original statue, which is in the museum, was made in 1618. The one outside is a replica. Nobody knows why the statue is so loved by locals and visitors, but no visit to Belgium is complete without a visit and photo!

2. Stroll Through Old Town Ghent which is a charming town that looks like it did in the 1500's as one of Europe's most influential cities, complete with lovely canals filled with boats transporting people, stone-paved streets, beautiful, tall stone and brick buildings, a bustling market square called Korenmarkt, the iconic St. Michael's bridge over the river with a panoramic view of the town, and the grand St. Bavo's Cathedral.

3. Take a Boat Ride in the Meuse Valley just south of Brussels. In a rural and picturesque region, go to the towns of Dinant or Namur to catch a scenic boat that will take you past charming villages along the shores of craggy limestone cliffs, ruined castles and quaint waterfront towns. In addition to the boat ride, the area also has plenty of opportunities for horse riding, hiking and bicycling.



4. Check out Mini Europe just north of Brussels where you will get to explore the most iconic places on the continent - all in miniature! There are over 350 different mini attractions built to a scale of 1:25 to see as you stroll around throughout the park including the Eiffel Tower, the Roman Colosseum and Big Ben!

5. Tour the World's Largest Chocolate Museum: Chocolate Nation. Learn about how to make chocolate, and why it is important to Belgium. The best part: LOTS of samples and the chance to make your own chocolate!

6. Visit Waterloo just like Napoleon did where he was defeated in battle centuries ago. Check out the visitor center as well as get commanding views of the surrounding countryside from the top of the monument's hill. If you love learning about and visiting historical landmarks, this one should be on your bucket list!



7. Visit the Castle of Veves, which looks like it came straight out of a fairytale. This castle is near Namur, and is known as the Chateau de Veves. It was originally built in the 670's, and rebuilt in 1230, then rebuilt again after a fire in the 15th century. The views from outside the castle are just as stunning as the ones from inside.

8. Take a Morning Bike Ride Along Trappistenroute where you can rent bikes at the beginning of the loop at the Westmalle Brewery, and cycle through lovely Flanders and past the Trappist Abbey, founded in 1794. Once finished, you'll be back at the brewery and can trade your bike in for a beer as well as some traditional Belgium food.

9. Walk to the Highest Spot in Belgium by visiting the Hautes Fagnes wetland nature reserve, at an elevation of 2300 feet above sea level. The trails go along boardwalks and you can walk for miles in nature and see various wildlife including hare, deer and grouse.

10. Visit the Kasteel Van Loppem just outside of Bruges which was built in the 19th century for the King following WWI. During this time, it was also the command center for the Belgium Army. You can take a self guided tour and see oppulent furniture, art and other furnishings befitting a royal family. The gardens are also spectacular, and include a hedge maze.



**LET'S
GO TO BEAUTIFUL
BELGIUM!**



The GPC Committee Does the Big Apple!

By: Cindy Tobeck



The New York Botanical Garden is the GPC's biggest sponsor, and their support is critical for continuation of our many awards, including jackets, plaques, patches and trophies. The NYBG annually contracts with the Commonwealth to procure three of the biggest pumpkins in the world. This year we were fortunate to obtain three giants from the east coast: Steve Sperry's 2465.5, Ron Wallace's 2344.5, and the 2245.5 grown by Scott Andrusz. The growers are compensated for their pumpkins, and members of the GPC committee work closely with the NYBG staff to safely offload and place the pumpkins in a beautiful fall display. This year, Woody Lancaster, the GPC East Coast Representative,

Pete Caspers, the Midwest Rep, and myself, Cindy Tobeck, the West Coast Rep met in New York City. It was a long weekend of camaraderie, fun, adventure, and lots of community outreach sharing about giant pumpkins!

We worked primarily with NYBG's Exhibition Project Manager, Kenia Pittman, who always has a beautiful vision for the giant pumpkins, and this year was no exception. The giants were displayed on high rustic wooden boxes, and surrounded by a plethora of various and sundry gourds of every shape and color imaginable, creating a stunning fall display visible to patrons immediately as they entered the Garden.

NYBG loves to embrace each season, and for autumn, they had a lot of pumpkin educational displays as well as some cute pumpkin areas geared toward kids and families.



The GPC Committee in NYC...Cont.

By: Cindy Tobeck



Once the pumpkins were in place, Woody, Pete and I were able to have some fun! We toured the Botanical Gardens, ate, took a boat ride to see The Statue of Liberty, ate, toured Ellis Island, ate, checked out Times Square (including getting caught up in a street performance as well as a pro-Israel rally), ate, went to the Broadway show Hamilton, ate, laughed while at the New York Comedy Club, and ate some more! You can probably

guess what my biggest souvenir was: 5 extra pounds! #worthit

When the guys and I weren't eating (the food really was sooooo good!) we were doing our best to be friendly, knowledgeable and charismatic ambassadors to the NYBG visitors about everything to do with giant pumpkins! Saturday and Sunday were devoted to interacting with the throngs of people. During that time, one of our other jobs was to pull the seeds from the pumpkins, and the people absolutely LOVED this; everyone wants to see what a giant pumpkin looks like from the inside, how many seeds they have, and how big they are. Matt DeBacco joined us on Saturday to help with getting the seeds by climbing inside along with an eager NYBG staffer.

On Sunday, the weather was more cooperative, and that really brought out a huge crowd of visitors. Woody suggested that I climb up onto Ron's pumpkin and use the microphone to talk about the giants and answer questions. Anybody who knows me, knows you don't have to ask me twice to climb on a giant pumpkin! I was truly in my element, and loved interacting with



The GPC Committee in NYC...Cont.

By: Cindy Tobeck

the people, especially the many children. There were quite a few kids who had a high level of interest in growing giants, and I felt like with our outreach, we were not only able to offer a lot of information, but even encouraged some people, especially kids, to grow a giant pumpkin.

New York Botanical Garden's Fall-O-Ween lasted through two weekends. The first was featuring GPC ambassadors and the giant pumpkins, and the following weekend was dedicated to Scott Andrusz' beautiful orange beast as it was carved by the very talented Adam Bieron into a spooky sea creature.



2749
POUNDS

NEW WORLD
RECORD!



CONGRATULATIONS TRAVIS GIENGER!

When I set out this year I had one goal in the back of my mind. My hope was somehow I could hold onto the North American Record again. I wasn't sure what that meant or where it would bring me but wow, was I in for a whirlwind ride!

The season started out cool, and the plants catapulted out of the gate. I planted outside on April 22nd while it was snowing and well below freezing. The plants loved their setups and began expanding quickly. After 12 days I lost the main on the 2359 and decided to pull it because I broke a vine last year and pollinations struggled after that. I went with a backup 2365 that was started later on the 15th of April. This plant sat downstairs for too long with not ideal conditions. The irony of this story is the same day my WR plant lost it's main as well, which I did not learn for a couple days.

The plants grew well early, but I ended up losing the main on both plants twice. I believe it was heat from sitting on the plastic ends of the hoop houses and a combination of a heavy biological mix. The other plant was operator error and grew up into a chair at 13ft. I rerouted the main, grew another 6 ft, lost that yet again, then cut back three feet and rerouted, so now I was on a tertiary. I grew my plant out and set 'Michael Jordan' about 5 ft down on the new tertiary main. My other plant was a random tertiary about 10ft down and maybe 5 feet into the random tertiary. I had no choice but I knew timing was more crucial than waiting for perfect position. The sets were June 5th and June 11th .

The pumpkins both started out slow; we had a cool June and it was the first time I ever used that Florel stuff which may have caused some of it as well. Once the pumpkins hit about day 25 they both started

taking off decently. They were both growing, and up to 1500 pounds, both were behind my 2560. At one point I told the family no way we are going to California; these pumpkins are nothing special this year.

Much to my surprise they continued on fairly well. I was surprised that the numbers were pretty close

to my 2560 pace on both through July. I hit August 1st and was about 1700 and 1500 pounds, which was respectable since the 2560 was at 1500 pounds on Aug 1st and the backup plant pollinated after.

August brought decent temps, high humidity, some golf ball sized hail, and a plethora of other disasters.

I lost the stump on what would be the WR and cut the main down about 8 to 10ft too. This was mostly due to overwatering but my other pumpkin was fine. Mid August the pumpkins were growing well still, with a 10 day average of 33 pounds. I thought that was still pretty good. The Godzilla plant had a 10 day average of 43 pounds a day at about 2200 pounds and I got super nervous. It would only hang on two more days

and go down to a tiny rib split up top. It ended day 72 at 2,222 on a certified scale. I was seriously crushed. I knew that was the one and my other still had a shot but nothing quite like Godzilla.

At the end of August, it was state fair time for me. I work a ton of hours setting up let alone the 200 plus hours in 12 days down there staffing the booth. I managed to drive back and fourth and do a bit of maintenance in the dark. The pumpkin had dropped gains tremendously but there was nothing I could do being gone.

We hit Sept 1 at about 2400 pounds, at this point I still thought I should coast to a WR on tape but much to my surprise I ended up not gaining another inch in Sept or Oct. The good news is I grew this seed because I said anyone who hits 499 inches with it has a decent shot

at a world record. Everyone was coming over and smacking the pumpkin. It was always reassuring to hear them say this thing is thumps like an Oak tree!

September brought a whirlwind of reporters out. It's funny because I literally didn't make one call and had 6 or so news crews out before the weigh off. In my head I knew it had a slight chance at a WR but I had never weighed anything really heavy (double digits %) on a scale in 30 years. I attributed most of that to not growing heavy genetics. Regardless the media hype is real, they don't want to report on standard pumpkins for the most part, they want to hype records, so there it was. Regardless I figured if it was a total let down I could at least get the circumference jack o lantern record at 21ft 1 inch.

Picking day came and we were off to California, and again a lot of media hype surrounding the pumpkin.

Ron Root and Nick Kennedy showed up with what I knew was a good one. We had been talking and I figured it would be close as I knew that pumpkin wasn't under 2400 visually. Half Moon Bay was one of the craziest finishing weigh offs in pumpkin growing with Leonardo being DQ'd, then re-instated. Ron and Nick were



**THE WORLD RECORD!
BY: TRAVIS GIENGER**

THE WORLD RECORD 2749 CONT...

up next; they put it on the scale and I quickly said, "2490", they threw down a new California State Record of 2,497 pounds! I was ecstatic because they really wanted the record plus it was my seed.

However, deep down inside I knew it was my turn and I was fairly confident from lifting it with my machine we had 2400 cleared but not certain about 2500 pounds. I don't pre weigh my pumpkins, I once did and I thought my shop scale was broken. This was the first year in my current garden and the pumpkin instead of being around 1600 pounds went 27% light! After that I thought, "Why wreck the day? It is what it is."

The judges inspected the fruit, placed it on the scale which they built that year per my request. This only added to the nerves. Cameron, the announcer said, "Let's see what we have!" The

THE WORLD RECORD COMES BACK TO THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA AFTER A LONG RUN IN EUROPE

numbers flashed, 2,749 pounds! It didn't take but a split second and I knew, a new World Record! Thirty years of hard work and dedication had come down to one simple number flash. The outpouring of joy was surreal, and in that moment I just couldn't believe it.

The ceremony following the weigh off was incredible. Cameron is



always so generous and you can

just tell the entire community of Half Moon Bay lives for this event. A whirlwind of reporters had called for interviews afterwards. If you ever set the WR, get a white board calendar and be prepared for some crazy hours. Interviews with UK, Ireland, Canada, New Zealand, Australia, Mexico, and time zone conversions from California to east coast. I tried to embrace it all and take it all in but schedule wise forgot about a couple.

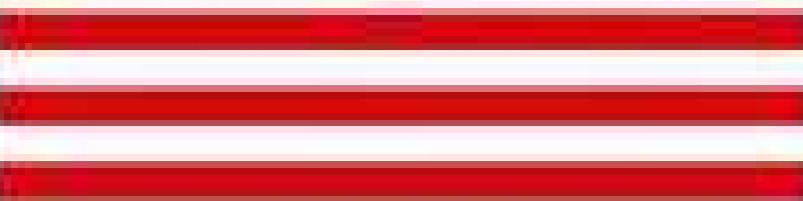
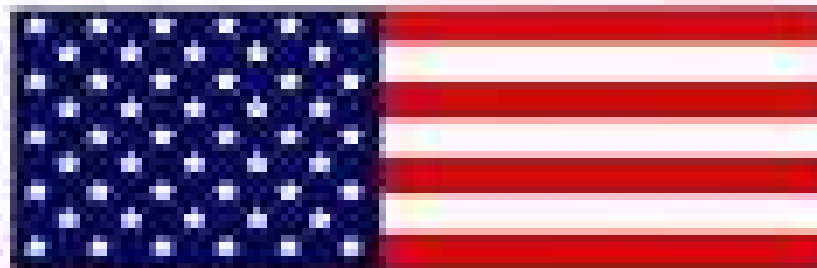
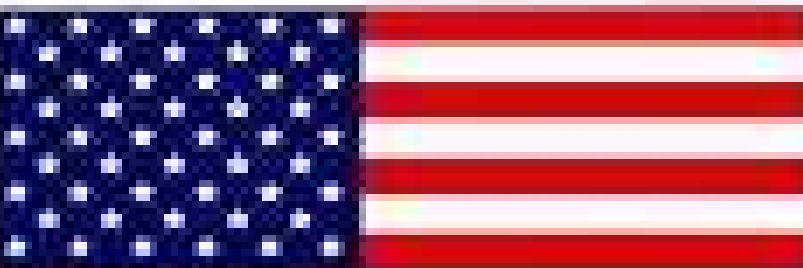
The carvers were calling, events, and we quickly needed to figure out what the destinations were for this pumpkin. There was a cool Veteran's thing that caught my attention so we went with that.

The parade in Half Moon Bay is amazing, and the outpouring of support from growers, friends and family was incredible. Once we got back to MN after being gone for 10 days, it was more events for the pumpkin, and eventually the pumpkin would make its way to New York for the carving. The carving event was incredible and they knocked it out of the park with the Veteran's memorial. The carving although only a side, but it turned out to be just perfect. The pumpkin was a World Record and

people wanted to see the

pumpkin just as much as the carving. The artist had carved a ton of pumpkins and he mentioned that the density was like nothing he had ever felt before. Not only was 'Michael Jordan' thick but it had the density of a carrot or butternut squash. The pumpkin traveled about 6500 miles in total, Midwest, West Coast, and East Coast.

This year will go down as probably the most memorable for me obviously. We can plan and hope for a record our entire lives but so many factors go into it that it is never a given. It actually happened and I couldn't be more proud and thankful for the people who have helped me along the way. I thank all the growers around the world who have pushed this hobby to new levels. Without you there wouldn't be the massive increase in weights every year. I truly feel we are on the verge of 3,000 pounds and it is going to happen next year. Best of luck to everyone in the offseason and hope to see you all in Belgium!



Results Are In: The 150 Square Foot Challenge

Final 150 CHALLENGE

October 31, 2023

<u>Weight</u>	<u>Name</u>	<u>Location</u>	<u>Award</u>
1229.7	Chris Rodebaugh	WV	\$177.0
1224.0	Dan Clement	ON, Canada	\$71.0
1179.0	Orville Jones	WI	\$35.5
1170.0	Paul Bongers	MN	\$35.5
973.5	Lee Zappa	PA	\$35.5
889.0	Adam Toboyek	WI	
872.0	Dave McQuay	ON, Canada	
804.0	Doug Kisamore	OH	
804.0	Dan Fleser	MI	
749.5	Cindy Tobeck	WA	
717.0	RC Cook	WV	\$25.0
657.2	Paul Jarosh	VA	
645.0	Dan Kruszyna	MA	
632.4	Sam Hochstetler	East Sussex, UK	\$25.0
528.3	Curtis Leach	Berkshire, UK	
494.0	Riley Sowle	WI	\$25.0
461.0	Samuel Girard	QC, Canada	
452.5	Brian Williams	OR	
443.2	Ethan Ramey	WV	
412.0	Alex Lemire	QC, Canada	
366.8	Sarah Baker	WV	
365.0	Hudson Hardesty	KY	\$25.0
363.5	Steve Maydan	CT	
351.0	Wayne Morgan	NC	
343.0	Scott Bayuk	KY	
309.5	Tony Prochaska	KS	
283.0	Jay Yohe	PA	
270.8	Lukasz Dryja	Berkshire, UK	
205.5	Richard Buckles	OR	
201.0	Dean Richardson	CT	
199.3	Hugh Leach	Berkshire, UK	
125.7	Martin Lacina	Retz, Austria	
116.8	Mario Jaglarz	Tulln, Austria	
88.0	Heather Schmitz	MN	\$25.0
68.5	Liesl Wollman	OR	

Stillwater World Record Top 10 Average

By: Joe Ailts

2136lbs. That's the world record top ten average achieved at Stillwater Harvestfest this year. And we could not be more thrilled with the outcome. Our event's humble beginnings stem back to the summer of 2005, when Matt Marose (rest in peace) called Joe Ailts and said, "Hey, you want to start a weigh off in Stillwater, MN?" The rest, as they say, is history. The St. Croix Grower's Association, the giant pumpkin club representing giant pumpkin enthusiasts in the greater Minneapolis/St. Paul metro area and beyond, in collaboration with event partner Summer Tuesday's, Inc., have set the goal of being the #1 weigh off site (as measured by top ten average) since the beginning. Harvestfest has achieved this goal three times since its inception (2011, 2014, and 2023). Over the course of its 19 year history, its TTA average is 4.9, ranking it consistently in top 5 weigh offs world wide. We share this not to brag, but to invite you, GPC community, to come share in the experience at Harvestfest. You will not soon forget it. In addition to the world class pumpkins that routinely show up at our scale, the weigh site overlooks the St. Croix river, at the birthplace of Minnesota. This river valley is classified as a national scenic waterway and offers breathtaking fall views right at the weigh off site.



Ok, that was a lot of fluff, to convince you, dear reader, that it's all sunshine and rainbows at Harvestfest. Now for a dose of reality. This year's event started in the shadow of Travis Gienger's heavy fruit and world record at Half Moon Bay. Event organizers had been hearing for weeks that many 2000 lb+ fruit were on their way to collect a piece of our \$27k prize structure. This included Charlie Bernstrom's pumpkin that, at 515" OTT, was the largest by volume ever to make it to scale intact. Giant whoppers started rolling in at 8:30 as the setup crew was scrambling to get everything rolling. It took two forklifts running full time to get the pumpkins offloaded and staged for weighing. This year, the forks were donated by a local generous event sponsor who failed to

Stillwater World Record Top...Cont.



provide full propane tanks. Both fuel tanks were empty by 10am. Event organizers asked a grower to run to fill up a tank at a local Ace hardware. This is the type of stuff that makes event coordinators pull their hair out. At least we didn't have a scale go down for a couple hours :) We hoped to start weighing at 9:30. Actual start time? 11:00. 45 giant pumpkins, a few EXH, and another 40+ "other category" entries showed up, making this the highest number of total entries we've ever had at the event. Harvestfest includes much more than just a giant pumpkin weighoff. It has become Stillwater's largest family-oriented event, drawing 10,000 attendees to downtown. Because we've hitched our wagon to a large community event, we're up against some deadlines and a few other logistical challenges associated with large crowds. Notably, a giant pumpkin drop that happens at 5:30 each year. This means we have to get our pumpkins weighed, results tabulated, and awards presented before that pumpkin drops. This means 80+ entries had to be weighed and all the other steps in a pretty tight window. At this point, the author is just belly aching about the challenges of coordinating a complex orchestra with extremely high stakes. It takes a village of willing and able volunteers

to make a dance like this come together, where the ten largest pumpkins to ever assemble in a single location can be weighed, recognized, and dispersed with flawless execution. While the 2501 Bernstrom ended up lighter than we had all hoped, we ended up weighing the two largest fruit ever grown in Wisconsin, the 2420 Mathiowitz and the 2360 Montsma, and having three pumpkins that would have been site records any other year helped secure the TTA. The SCGA Board of directors, in collaboration with many dedicated SCGA members, came together to host an event that achieved a milestone that was world record in caliber. And we're thrilled with the outcome. Congratulations to the growers who weighed at Stillwater. All of you. Every entry contributed to our record setting day. And we look forward to doing it again next year.

What is Under Your Pumpkin?

By: Lee Roof

Over the past several years I have developed an interesting and, I believe, fairly unique system for growing my pumpkins. For reasons that will become obvious, I have nicknamed it the “poor person’s greenhouse.”

I live in the Pacific Northwest and my house and patch are within several hundred yards/meters of the cold waters of Puget Sound. Our temperatures are much lower than surrounding areas throughout the growing season. In the summer daily temperatures only occasionally climb above 80F/27C and nighttime temperatures are rarely above 60F/16C and frequently drop to 50F/10C.

Simple blankets over the fruit do not seem to offer much protection from these cooler nighttime temperatures, particularly when it rains. As a result, for years I have grown my pumpkins under blue tarp hoop houses with small heaters set on thermostats to maintain the nighttime temperatures closer to 65-70F/18-21C. Small fans, also set on thermostats, turn on when it does warm up to draw the cooler air under lifted edges of the tarp and into the hoop houses.

For several years my pumpkin growth became quite unusual: the top portions would grow much more than the bottom resulting in bizarrely shaped fruit. There were even pumpkins which ended up with the blossom end being driven down onto the mat. I had to cut holes in the mats and excavate the soil underneath to relieve stress on blossom end.



It dawned on me one day when I was working under one of the tarp hoop-houses how much warmer it was at the top of the hoop house than at the base. The mat actually felt cool to the touch while it was quite warm higher up. I wondered whether the warmer temperatures higher up promoted more growth on the top of the pumpkin than at the bottom. I changed a few things about my design and have since had improved growth, more personal bests and more symmetrical pumpkins.

First, I hang a small fan at the top of the hoop house to circulate and blow the warmer air down lower. This fan runs twenty-four hours a day. Secondly, I place heating cables under the pumpkin to warm the fruit from below. Along with the heating cables, I have drip hoses run under the pumpkins to prevent relative ‘deserts’ under and beyond the fruit which happens when drip hoses are terminated at or are run in odd configurations around the fruit.

Once the best fruit is chosen, the process of excavating the dirt and installing the drip hoses and heating cables can begin. It can be very nerve wracking to do this work and care must be taken to avoid any accidental trauma. I gently place the pumpkin on a small piece of wood and carefully arrange the vine to give myself plenty of room to maneuver. After making sure I have the final dimensions of the hoop house well in mind, I dig out three or four parallel trenches roughly 5 in/13cm deep in the area where the pumpkin will eventually grow. Two inch/5cm pipes have had a linear slit sawed along the entire length are placed, slit side down, into the trenches and the drip hoses are fed through the pipes and out the opposite end. In this manner, the drip hoses are protected from the weight of the pumpkin and can still deliver water under the pumpkin and beyond.

(Photo #1)

What is Under Your Pumpkin...Cont.

By: Lee Roof



The soil is smoothed out and immediately above the pipes, I install the soil cable roughly where the bulk of the pumpkin will ultimately rest. Soil is replaced over the top leaving about 2-3 in/5-7cm of soil between the cable and the grow mat. (Photo #2) I use two mats for ease of repositioning before the pumpkin gets too big. I do not grow on plywood believing that would create too much insulation and not allow the heat to rise and keep the fruit warmed from below. I set the thermostat of the cable to about 75-80F/24-27C to prevent overheating. I am impressed by how one can feel the subtle differences in the temperature of the mat simply by touching the mat over the cables compared to further away.

Lastly, the hoops are installed, the 'ceiling fan' is attached to the middle hoop and the thermostatically controlled fan and a small 200-watt heater are placed. (Photo 3) One additional benefit to this system is rodent control. I have found putting moth balls (naphthalene and/or para-dichlorobenzene) and rat bait inside the hoop house helps discourage rodents and I've had no evidence of rodent damage for years. New moth balls need to be added every week or two to keep the smell strong enough to remain effective. This system keeps the fruit warmer and drier in our cool environment than simply covering the pumpkin with blankets. While it may not be needed for greenhouse growers or those in warmer climates, it may still promote more growth later in the season when the days are shorter and the nights cool down. It would be fairly easy to put in the cables and thermostat sensing tip early in the season. If late season conditions warrant it, a tarp-hoop house could be built and the soil cable turned on. Maybe keeping your fruit warmer in September and early October can give you a few extra pounds at the weigh-off.



A Little GPC & Pumpkin History

Can you name these growers from 1993?

By: Jack LaRue



Going from left to right is the New World Record holder Don Black. Don not only set a new world record at 884 pounds, he also won the very first GPC pumpkin weigh-off. Don grew his pumpkin in Winthrop,

New York. He took his entry to Windsor, Nova Scotia where Howard Dill was present.

Howard Dill spent years breeding pumpkins for color and shape. He had

to be very proud of what he saw that day. He wanted to live long enough to see the 1000 mark broken.

The following year (1994) his wish was almost fulfilled when Herman Bax set a new world record at 990 pounds, just 10 pounds shy. Howard got to see his wish fulfilled in 1996. When Bill Greer and the Zehr's (Nathan & Paula) broke the 1000 mark. The Zehr's grew a new world record of 1061.0 lbs. That same year 1996 a Canadian grower Bill Greer grew a giant that weighed in at 1006 pounds. Bill set a new Canadian record. Howard Dill passed in May 2008, one year after Joe Jutras set a new world record of 1689 pounds.

I wonder if Howard ever imaged pumpkins would reach the weights we see today with the new world record setting at 2702.9 pounds. In 2022 the Paton brothers lost one weighing over 2900 pounds. It is possible that the 3000 pound mark will fall soon.

Back to the name game, from left to right: Don Black 1993, 884 pounds, Howard Dill 1980 & 1981 459.0 & 493.5 pounds, Norm Gallagher 1984, 612.0 pounds, Gordon Thomson 1989, 755.0 pounds.

Thank these growers because we have all benefited from their work and generosity.

2023 Tomato Season in Review

By: Scott Luers



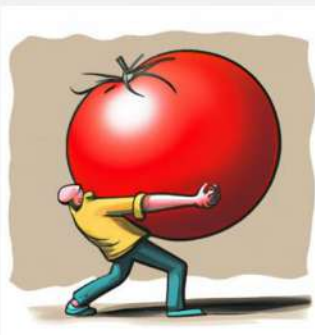
The 2023 tomato season has come to a close, and it's time to review the achievements that stood out this year. Whether you're a seasoned tomato grower, first time grower, or anything in between, this article should help in seed selection for next year.

The Impressive 9.06 Brown



The 9.06 Brown maintained its stellar performance by securing four tomatoes in the top 10 this season. Its consistent excellence is a testament to its reliability as a high-performing seed. This seed has now been the mother seed of 9 tomatoes over 7lbs. It has set many personal bests, geographic records, and the current world record. Growing the 9.06 Brown the European record was set by Mehdi Daho with the second biggest tomato of the year 8.80 Daho. Another 9.06 grower Chad New smashed the Colorado state record with the 5.44 New, now holding the record for both pumpkin and tomato in the state. The 9.06 seeds are red HOT! Unfortunately, they are going to be harder to find this year as Chris is now out of them.

Jack La Rue's Dominance



Jack La Rue once again proved his amazing consistency, reigning as the king of the hill by breaking the 10lbs barrier with his 10.46 tomato. This remarkable feat makes him only the third person ever to achieve such a milestone. Grown from the 7.94 La Rue 2022 seed, I had a feeling about the 7.94 seed. It was the only non-proven seed I grew this year. It was a very strong plant for me until disease ruined my season. Keep an eye out for the 10.46 La Rue and the mother seed 7.94 La Rue, I expect them to be highly sought after in the upcoming year.

La Rue's consistency was evident with three more tomatoes making it in the top ten: 8.51, 7.98, and 7.57. The 8.51 was grown from the 5.80 La Rue, which also produced a 7+ lbs tomato last year in Switzerland by Juerg Wiesli. The 5.80 and the 7.94 were grown directly from the infamous 5.71 Lambchop seed.

7.06 La Rue 2020 genetic tree increased this year with the 7.98 LaRue and the previous year's 6.32 Larue 22, which yielded the 7.57 LaRue and 7.40 Johnson this year. This reinforces the success of the 7.06 and we should see increased demand for the 7.06 and 6.32.

Faust Continued Success

The Fausts had another outstanding year, building on their world record of 11.65 from the previous season. They added a pile of tomatoes 5lbs and bigger including 3 in the top 10 and 6 in the top 20. Their top 3 tomatoes all grown from the Brown 9.06 seed were the 8.49, 8.00, and 7.92. These seeds and the very scarce 11.65 WR seed should all be in high demand.



Other notable tomatoes in the top 10

Brandon Clayton grew a nice 7.69 off the 6.48 Young. The 6.48 Young was grown last year off the 9.06 Brown. Brandon listed this as a Megadom because of the traits of the plant matched that variety, even though on paper it's a Domingo. A little further investigation discovered that the 6.48 Young was hand pollinated with the other surrounding giant tomato plants. More than likely the Young seed is a nice open/cross and should be a good seed to try next year.

The proven 5.32 Howell/Jolivett added another impressive tomato to its record with the 7.06 Jolivette 2023. Notably, the 5.32 is also the mother seed of the 9.06 Brown, further underlining its reliability and success in producing top-quality tomatoes. Could the 7.06 Jolivette be the next 9.06 Brown? Time will tell.

Dan Sutherland Land

If you want to see something unbelievable find Dan Sutherlands social media posts on Facebook, YouTube or Big Pumpkin. Last year he grew a 16.85 UOW tomato. This year he grew two 17lbs and four 13lbs tomatoes plus a bunch of "smaller" ones. Dan is truly on another level and so far ahead of everybody its insanity. All the tomatoes are UOW as he doesn't grow them for competition and none are registered. Nonetheless great achievement.

The other seeds I have my eye on for next year

(All grown directly from the 5.71 Lambchop)

5.57 LaRue 2023

5.43 Gantner 2022 (grew the 6.81 Gantner this year)

3.62 Harnica 2023

Legacy of the 5.71 Lambchop Seed



Last year 8 of the top 10 tomatoes were under the 5.71 Lambchop genetic tree. This year it is 10 of the top 10. For the last two years only 5 tomatoes in the top 20 were not under the Lambchop tree. That is 35 of 40 of the biggest tomatoes in the world for the last two years. On the all-time biggest list 7 of the top 10 are from the Lambchop seed genetics. Pure dominance of this seed line is absolutely obvious.

I can wait for next year to see where this crazy train of giant tomato genetics will end up.

Plant a tomato next year and maybe you can be the next tomato king

CAN TECHNOLOGY BE DETRIMENTAL TO GROWING GIANT PUMPKINS?

Your initial answer to that question would probably be no, with a pretty quick question of your own. How could technology be detrimental? Technology is what allows us to share information so fast, get answers to our questions or just to talk to other growers. Technology allows us to watch a weigh off as it is happening, or to see results as soon as they are posted on Big Pumpkins or social media, feeding our addiction. It allows us to research seeds and look for traits that we want our names to be attached to. All of this, literally in the palm of our hands. I'm sure there are many other ways that technology could be used to further giant pumpkin growing.

So how can technology be detrimental to this amazing hobby/sport/addiction of ours? There are 2 ways that I can think of

HOWARD DILL WOULD LIKELY BE VERY DISAPPOINTED THAT PEOPLE ARE ALTERING PUMPKIN PHOTOS TO INCREASE SEED SALES

right off that technology hurts growing these giant fruits. One is pretty straight forward, selling your seeds. While I admit, I have sold seeds and probably will continue to sell seeds, there is a time and place to sell those seeds. I struggle with selling them on social media and pushing them before the auctions on



bigpumpkins.com. I feel seeds from smaller pumpkins and squash that are not being requested for auctions, are better suited for selling on social media. The big seeds, 2000+, that auctions are wanting should be kept off social media until after the auctions. Although, I don't blame people for wanting to sell some because it is expensive to grow them and recouping some of that money is pretty nice.

The second way that technology hurts giant pumpkin growing is a little more complicated and really the reason for my article. Howard Dill would be amazed at the size his creation has gotten to, but I can't help but wonder how disappointed he would be that people are using technology to alter a photograph to make an already pretty pumpkin "more pretty". And to think that they are doing it to sell seeds for people to hopefully win an award in his namesake. And let's face it, selling those seeds is really the only reason to alter your photograph.

In the palm of our hands we have the ability to change the color of our pictures, some would say enhance them. PLEASE STOP DOING IT!!! This hurts others and those that can tell you're doing it look down on you for doing it. Some of you don't know that you are doing it though, if you have an iPhone for example, you may or may not realize that Apple has built in photo enhancement. I would encourage you to take your

phone to wherever you got it and have them help you turn off the photo enhancement. Yes, a lot of people can tell that something is off. Some are fooled, but believe me, in time, word will get around and you will lose in the end. When people can no longer trust that a photo is authentic, they lose trust in those posting the photos. And while writing this article, I discovered that even videos can be filtered or enhanced quite easily with an iPhone, or I'm sure with any other phone as well.

Above are some examples of "enhanced" photos. They are up close so as not to call anyone out. The pictures on the left are original, which came from known and trusted sources, the pictures on the right are of the same pumpkin but enhanced by whoever posted them, whether knowingly or not. Admittedly, the 3rd one doesn't show much difference on such a small example of the whole thing, but with the full picture it is quite noticeable. The last one, if the

whole picture was shown, would be obviously changed. It was one that I did to show what the possibilities are with a phone and today's technology.

So please, for the love of the hobby, stop posting "enhanced" pictures, show what they truly are, be happy with what you grew.

-A Concerned Grower

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Contact Your GPC Representatives:

SUBMIT ARTICLES TO THE GPC COMMON GROUND!

Thank you for reading Edition 19 of The GPC Common Ground! It is my hope to publish a newsletter that reflects the interests of giant fruit and vegetable growers as well as provide educational content, grower features, event recaps, club spotlights, and regional highlights.

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

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

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

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

Cindy Tobeck: cindy@gpc1.org

Happy fall fellow growers! I loved seeing my friends and their pumpkins at different weigh offs in California, Oregon and Washington, and enjoyed a win with my big pumpkin, as well growing the biggest squash in the world for the second year in a row! Going to New York to help at the NYBG with Pete and Woody was a blast, and a great way to wrap up my season. Now I am looking forward with eager anticipation to the International Growers Convention in Kasterlee. I had a lot of fun researching about Belgium, and I hope that you will join me there for another memorable Big Show filled with European hospitality!



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