



The Patch

Pennsylvania Giant Pumpkin Growers Association Newsletter

February 2021

And The Results Are In!



Wow...what an incredible 2020 season. You could tell that everyone was cooped up and spent a ton of time in the patch! Our squash category was especially competitive with state records broken within 3 minutes of each other.

Special thanks to the Contres Greer Social Hall in Northern Cambria, PA for hosting the 2020 weigh-off!



Dave & Carol Stelts with their 1st place giant!

Atlantic Giant Pumpkin

- 1) 1,883.50 lbs. Dave and Carol Stelts
- 2) 1,778 lbs. Todd and Donna Skinner
- 3) 1,699 lbs. Jeff Theil
- 4) 1,688 lbs. Kevin Snyder
- 5) 1,613 lbs. Paul Smarsh

Squash

- 1) 1,652.50 lbs. Lee and Derrick Zappa
- 2) 1,298.50 lbs. Jay Yohe
- 3) 1,110 lbs. Todd and Donna Skinner

Long Gourd

- 1) 130 inches Jay Yohe
- 2) 120.50 inches Larry and Gerry Checkon
- 3) 107.63 inches Mark and Alice Kiger

Watermelon

- 1) 175 lbs. Jay Yohe
- 2) 126 lbs. Mark and Alice Kiger

Tomato

- 1) 4.30 lbs. Jerry Rose

Field Pumpkin

- 1) 117.50 lbs. Jay Yohe
- 2) 107 lbs. Larry and Gerry Checkon
- 3) 101.50 lbs. Jerry Rose

Bushel Gourd

- 1) 269 lbs. James Carson
- 2) 253.50 lbs. John Kaminski
- 3) 23 lbs. David English

Marrow

- 1) 67 lbs. Jay Yohe
- 2) 25 lbs. Michael Henry
- 3) 23lbs Michelle Callihan





A Sweet Farewell

A huge thank you to Larry and Gerry Checkon. The two of them started growing in 1998. Gerry set the World Record in 1999 at 1131 pound and Larry set the World Record in 2005 at 1469 pounds. Both Larry and Gerry were inducted into the GPC Hall of Fame in 2013. Larry was the Vice President of the club for many years and then President from 2016 until stepping down at the end of the season in 2020. Gerry was secretary for over 20 years until stepping down at the end of last growing season. Both Larry and Gerry are remarkable people who went above and beyond for this club and put their hearts into the smooth operation at every weigh off. It is with honor that we send them with great wishes and can not wait to see what they bring to the next weigh off.

New Officers

President: Jay Yohe

Jay Yohe has been growing in the club since 2016. He's an impressive, well versed grower not only growing giant pumpkins but also long gourds, green squash and other large fruit. He held the PA state record for squash in 2019 and then again in 2020, for 3 minutes. After competition he loves creating a lovely display of his harvest. When not in the patch he enjoys spending time with his family and taking care of his goats, chickens and turkey.

Vice President: Paul Smarsh

Loves growing giant pumpkins and has been growing for five years. To date his largest has been 1513 lbs but he hopes to break the 2000 lb mark in the near future. When he's not in the patch he loves doing anything automotive. He's also an electrician by trade.

Treasure: Ted Cope

Has been growing for 12 years. His largest fruit thus far was last years pumpkin weighing in at 1464 lbs. He's been a member of the club since 2012 and treasure of the club for the past five years. He has worked at UPS for 25 years.. Go Brown! Outside of the patch he enjoys coaching girls softball and has been doing that for the past 9 years. He has a son Travis (33) and a daughter Jenna (16). He loves sharing his growing hobby with all new comers that want to try to grow these giants.

Secretary: Holly Reiter

Loves watching her husband grow giant pumpkins and filming his progress at measurement time. She's a mother of three young children which occupies most of her free time. For fun she loves antiquing and refinishing furniture or upcycling furniture. She says her husband is the best!



Marvin Hicks, former Treasure and grower for the Pennsylvania Giant Pumpkin Grower's Association, passed away on December 10th, 2020. His largest pumpkin weighed in at 745 lbs. His presence will be missed. The club would like to offer the Hicks family our condolences during this time of grieving.

PGPGA 2021 Seed Distribution

The annual PGPGA seed distribution with be mailed in mid-March. We would like to thank all of the growers for their generous donations!

New Weigh Off Location



**LEIGHTY'S
FARM MARKET**

Officers of the PGPGA are excited to announce a new location (Leighty's Farm Market in Newry, Pa) for the 2021 weigh-off. They have a large paved parking lot that will be excellent for our scale to ensure accurate weights. In case of rain there is a green house that will be available for us.

It is also close to many major roads for those grower's that are traveling a long way for our weigh off. Thank you so much to Leighty's Farm Market for allowing us to make this our home for the 2021 growing season... we can't wait! Stay tuned for more information about the weigh-off!

Monsters in the Steel City

Pittsburgh, Pa is crazy for the giant pumpkins and it showed. With the threat of Covid-19 cancelling everything fun this fall, the Monster Pumpkin Festival in Pittsburgh found a way around the virus.

David Stelts, member of the Pennsylvania Giant Pumpkin Grower's Association, bought up some of your pumpkins for this amazing display and it was quite a showcase. With COVID-19 causing cancellations and restrictions, on there had to be some adjustments to the 3rd annual event. The staff and carvers of the giant pumpkins turned Gold Lot 1-A near Heinz Field into a drive thru pumpkin wonderland.



Despite the inability for people to physically gather, residents and viewers rode by in droves. A public safety estimate of 20,000 vehicles, most of them during the Halloween weekend when the exhibit was it until 10 p.m., passed by the display— with spectators. Based on estimates of 3-4 people/car, the festival was estimated to 60,000-80,000 spectators looking at your pumpkins fellow growers.



It always gives you a sense of accomplishment when people appreciate your hard work and dedication. Without growers like you, the Monster Pumpkin Festival in Pittsburgh would not happen! We anticipate a terrific 2021 growing season and even more growers pumping out beautiful giants that find their way to the festival to be celebrated the with shock and awe...and Pittsburghers exclaiming:

“Yin’s guys goin’ dahn er to the Punkin Festvl N’at?”

If you love pumpkins as much as the “Burgh” did, you’d be in love with this display. Though the festival had to pull back on some of the interactive crowd activities such as the kids tractor pull, pumpkin hand out, pie eating contest and the giant pumpkin boat races, the festival was still a great success...

The PGPGA would like to congratulate club member Jeff Theil, who earned his GPC jacket in 2020!



The fruit included a personal best Atlantic Giant pumpkin 3rd place at the PGPGA weigh-off at 1,699 lbs. a new Ohio state record squash at 1,423 lbs. and another squash weighing in at 1,068.5 lbs. Congratulations, Jeff!

“The Big Beauty” How Dan Kruszyna Grew the 2045 in 2020

Dan Kruszyna’s goal each year is a new pumpkin personal best, and in 2020, an early start was the only way to get it done. Dan set his sights on a pollination date 2 weeks earlier than his normal range of July 1st - July 5th, but the work began long before then. Dan prepped his patch in the fall of 2019 by adding dry Humic acid, kelp meal, 20-20-20, 0-0-50, lime, Azomite and crushed oyster shells. In the Spring, he warmed the soil early and buried 80’ heating cables in his two hoop houses which measure an enormous 14 by 20 feet! No soil tests needed for Dan.

Dan started his seed selection (including the 2051 Marshall and 2005 Haist) in 2-gallon pots on April 18th and transplanted them into hoop houses on May 5th. He always doubles up on his plants and culled final choices on May 31st, shutting off the heating cables shortly afterwards. The protective plastic was removed from the hoop houses in mid-June as the plants had outgrown, and daytime temps were cooking the plants.



Dan had an 800 square foot plant in a Christmas tree pattern, allowing 2 or 3 secondaries before the pumpkin to grow in a spider leg pattern. The 2051 Marshall (F) was pollinated with the 2005 Haist (M) on June 23rd, about 14’ feet out on the main vine. Although Dan had planned for a fruit further out, the next two attempts on the main aborted, which caused him to keep this gourd.

Dan used both systemic pesticides and contact sprays, and alternated different kinds throughout the year. He started when the plants were young with applications of Tree and Shrub and a small amount of powdered Sevin to stop the corn maggots. He used Bifen, Dominion and Spectracide throughout the year and always tried to apply it before the flowers open. His Fungicides choices were Root Shield, Companion, Eagle 20, Daconil, Agri-fos and TKO, alternated weekly with a gas-powered blower.

The summer was extremely dry, which required Dan to water almost every day, but also gave him free reign to add water and fertilizer to his heart’s content, using more seaweed and humic/fulvic acid than ever before. This paired with companion, essential, Azos and Root microbes, and a mixture of kelp, root shield, WOW mycorrhiza and Biomin calcium for vine burying, placed at every leaf node using an old parmesan cheese shaker.

Dan started measuring at day 20 like any year, not that impressive at 95 lbs. At day 30, the fruit was only 434 lbs. In the past, his pumpkins exceeded 600 lbs. at day 30, so the 2020 attempt at a PB looked like a pipe dream. Then, Dan noticed increasing growth rates around day 27, and on day 40, it measured a whopping 929 pounds!

DAP	Est. Weight	Avg. Growth
30	434 lbs.	-----
40	929 lbs.	49.5 lbs./ day
50	1,258 lbs.	32.9 lbs./ day
60	1,506 lbs.	24.8 lbs./ day
70	1,668 lbs.	16.2 lbs./ day
80	1,758 lbs.	9.0 lbs./ day

After day 80 on September 13th, growth dramatically slowed and there were skin splits and sap oozing out. Then, there were 3 hard frosts 3 days starting in mid-September, killing most of the plant, and adding some drama at the end of the season. The massive pumpkin was finally harvested on day 101, and taped 1,798 lbs.



Dan took his Massachusetts monster to the Deerfield weigh-off at Demer’s garden center in New Hampshire on Saturday, October 3rd, where he “wowed” the competition with a 2nd place finish, and also won the distinguished Howard Dill award for prettiest orange pumpkin over 500 lbs.! The 2051 Marshall was the fastest growing pumpkin Dan ever had peaking at 50 lbs. a day! Dan set a new personal best and hit the 1-ton mark with no soil test, no tissue tests. Congratulations, Dan!