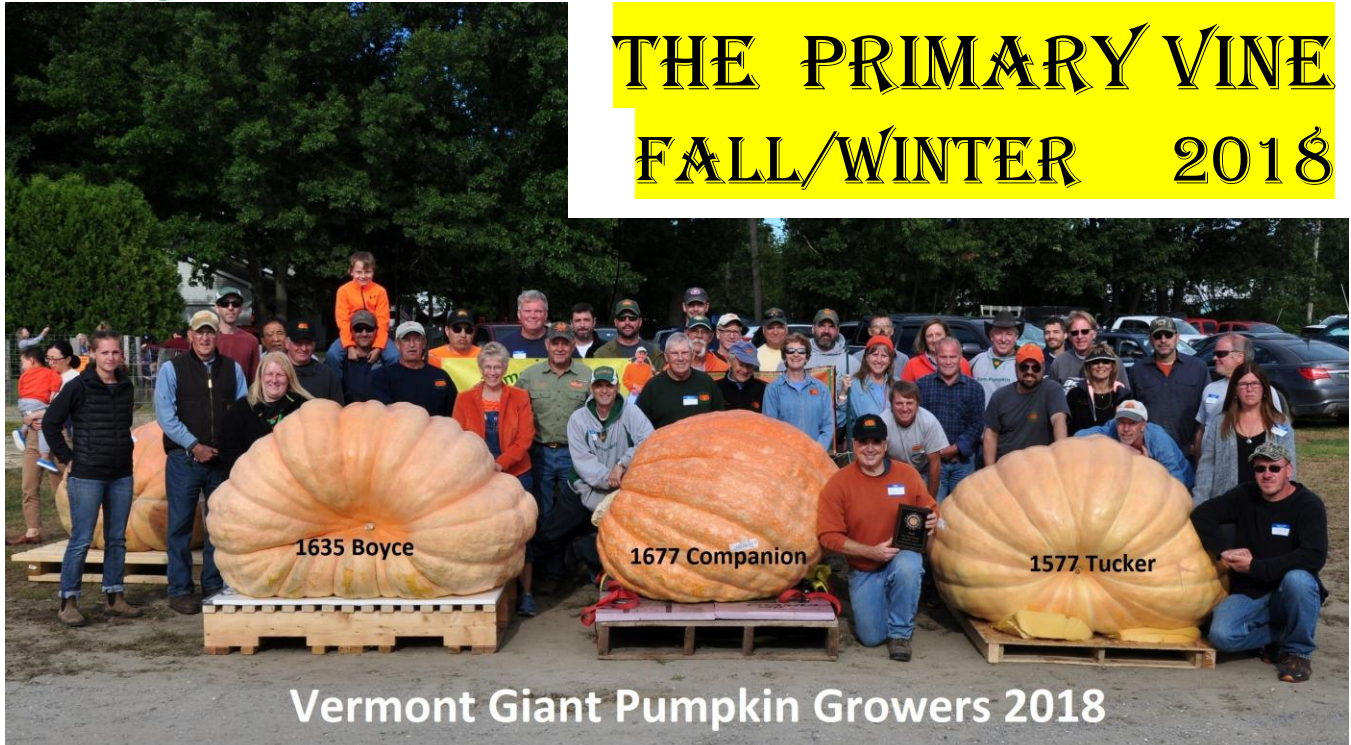




THE PRIMARY VINE FALL/WINTER 2018



Vermont Giant Pumpkin Growers 2018

Word from the President:

Greetings;

As I sit down to write this on November 13, 2018, I look out on a snow-covered landscape. Its official, whether you were ready for it or not, winter is readily approaching. The pumpkin and vegetable season are long over and it's time to reflect upon last year and to think about the growing year to come.

The club's weigh-off at Sam Mazza's was well attended with members from Canada, New England, and New York. Michael Cole set a new Vermont State Record with his 205-pound Bushel Gourd and twenty-nine Atlantic Giant Pumpkins were weighed, the top ten were all over 1,000 pounds! Impressive, and I believe that it might be a record for our club. Also, there were twelve new personal bests, congratulations to all of you for this achievement! Thanks to Sam Mazza and his staff for hosting and doing another amazing job of moving our pumpkins. And to everyone that attended and volunteered to lend a hand to make the weigh-off a fun time for all!

I am currently working on the arrangements for the winter meeting and I will be contacting those members that qualified for the club's fleece jacket. The winter meeting will also be a time for the election of a club president and secretary for a two-year

term. Please consider volunteering for either position, contact me or a club director with your interest and to obtain more information. The club is only successful with member participation!

Our seed auction gathering is underway for our annual fund-raising event and it should be online on BIG PUMPKINS sometime in January 2019. If you have special seeds that you think would raise a few bucks for the club and you are willing to part with them please contact me, Revenuer@hotmail.com or give me a call at 802-537-4775.

While I am on the seed topic, we are once again asking for seeds for our membership seed swap, look for the notice in this newsletter and I will be contacting you again by email soon.

In the meantime, I hope to see you at the winter meeting and I wish you and your family a healthy, safe and happy holiday season.

Dan Boyce

MEET THE MEMBERS

(The featured member this issue is Matt Debacco. He has been a member for many years and has been our Winter Meeting speaker many times. Matt lives in Rocky Hill, CT. His personal best is 1766.5 lbs, which he grew in 2013.)

Where do you live and how many years have you lived there?

I live in Rocky Hill, Connecticut and have lived there my entire, 34 years and counting.

What do you do for regular work (if retired what did you do for work, how long)?

My day job is a high school science teacher, but I am also working for the University of Connecticut to educate new farmers about growing practices and diagnosing diseases. I will also be teaching a class there in the spring.

What is your family status, married, kids, pets, etc? Do you have any other hobbies?

Currently I am single, with only pumpkins to take care of ;-)

How many years have you been growing giants?

2019 will mark my 19 th year growing pumpkins, but there was a time when I grew giant pumpkins for 2,367 continuous days due to multiple years of a winter breeding/cloning project at UConn.

How did you get interested in growing giants?

I originally became interested in pumpkins when I was cleaning out an old brush pile in the late summer and found a bunch of pumpkins growing randomly (probably from an old Halloween display) and thought if they grow this easily, what would happen if I actually tried ;-). My dad only gave me enough area for one plant, so I thought if I could only grow one plant, it might as well be one big pumpkin.

What do you like most about growing giants?

Since I have an Masters in Agronomy (growing field plants), I like the challenge that giant pumpkins bring. Also, when you can literally watch something grow, that is always fun to watch.

What is your biggest challenge or obstacle in growing?

The greatest challenge is beating my personal best because I know all the tricks that were done and now I have to improve on my own methods.

Do you have any help in the patch?

My dad helps with the mechanical aspects of the patch, but this basically means his work is done when the plants go in. He will help with the tripod set-up at harvest time, but he has never grown a pumpkin plant to date.

What is one thing you've done that you think has improved your weights?

In general, it has been continual research into plant production. But this came after making daily/required tasks as efficient as possible. Examples include drip irrigation on a timer with a fertilizer injector. There is also a mist blower for foliar applications. Keeping pests away with four different fences (buried for woodchucks, chicken wire for rabbits, reflective netting for aphids and electric fence for squirrels).

Any words of advice for new growers?

For new growers, I encourage them to try and find a mentor. This can be via e-mail or a local grower can be a great resource. Also, attending a weigh-off is where someone new can easily find some of the best growers in the area. People who grow pumpkins are typically very easy to talk to, and this can help get you on the right path. Also, there will be challenges and disappointment at times. Work through these challenges and keep on trying.



VGPGA Weigh-off:

Was held Saturday September 22nd at Sam Mazza's Farmstand in Colchester. We had 28 official pumpkin entries from Vermont, New York, Connecticut, Rhode Island and Canada. For the first time ever the top ten pumpkins were all over 1,000 pounds. There were many personal bests, some new growers, some new jacket winners AND a new site record!



1st Place: Kevin Companion – Huntington, VT

To see all the pumpkins that were weighed check out this google folder:

https://drive.google.com/open?id=1-hce3yHFRK21OIIDJONtRHjZ3q_PDkLh

Membership 2019 : *If you haven't already done so please renew your membership. Dues are only \$20 per year. Your dues cover annual seed swap, Winter Meeting, Summer BBQ and Patch Tour and Weigh-off in September, as well as bi-annual Newsletter. What a deal. You can register by mailing form and check to Ann Squires or you can pay on-line via PayPal from our website.*
<http://vermontgiants.tripod.com/id26.html>

Q: What do you call a fat pumpkin?

A: A plumpkin.

Q: How do you fix a damaged jack-o-lantern?

A: You use a pumpkin patch.

02/09/2019 - Save the date! The Annual Winter Meeting will take place Saturday February 9th, 2019 at the Comfort Inn and Suites in Barre, Vermont. Start time is 10:00AM, all the details are specified later on. RSVP by emailing us at vermontgpg@hotmail.com or you can telephone Dan Boyce @ 802-537-4775.

I intended to include this story last year, I apologize to the anonymous author for my forgetfulness, I hope you all enjoy his shenanigans in the patch, from R.O.U.S:

Patch Shenanigans:

Any of us that have been growing for a while have had them, the year when everything seems to go wrong. The previous fall we did our best fall patch prep ever. We acquired the hot seeds during the winter. Spring arrives grudgingly but we overcome and get our plants in the patch. Then it usually starts as drip drip, one small issue after another until we realize that nothing is going as planned and on the checklist of possible problems there are no more boxes to check. This is the time when we need to dig deep to find what it is that motivates us to do it again next year. There needs to be some refreshing joy.

2017 was that way for Paul Gouin, Durham CT. Along with all the issues we all deal with he was plagued by various pest. Normally we see the damage and it's characteristic of one recognizable pest or another and we deal with them. Paul's critters were stealthy and ate the ends of his growing tips but something also gnawed at the vines themselves, chewing off the top edge of the vine leaving open holes. Paul was determined to catch the hungry critter one way or another. He set have-a-heart traps but nothing inside while the bait is gone. We suggest various other baits and 'tricks' but still no critters. The next step was to install a trail camera to at least catch them in the act. At one point he actually saw a woodchuck in the distance but not close enough to properly deal with it. One day he gets 'lucky' and there was something in his trap. Perhaps the end is near but NOOOO. It's a live skunk! Nobody ever wants to find that in their trap. After some consults in BP chat he managed to release the striped critter without harm to it or himself.

It rapidly became a hapless season for Paul with all the critter damage and pumpkins that either failed to set, aborted or plant damaged beyond recovery. Their needs to be a little excitement in ones patch one way or another. After all what are friends for, right? It seemed to me that Paul needed to find a little something good in his patch so off I went to acquire just the right thing for him to find in his trap next, a rubber chicken of course. Well I discovered rubber chickens don't come cheap at \$14 so instead I settled for the more reasonable life like big \$5 rubber rat.

It wouldn't be any fun if I were to get caught on his trail camera placing the rat in his patch so I needed a diversion. It didn't take long with my friend google to find just the right thing. I printed out the picture I needed and taped it to a bamboo pole to plant in front of the camera while I did the deed.



But Wait !

Like any bad infomercial there's more. A patch with multiple problems deserves multiple responses. This little prank was so successful it got me to think, what can I do next? Paul's summer needed positive reinforcement to conclude the season and have him in the right frame of mind to be ready for next year.

I knew just what he needed next, so I gathered some supplies.



It doesn't look like much but that's the fun part. I had no idea what I was doing and I'd never tried the paper Mache stuff so it was all one BIG experiment. The big black balloon was round so I inflated it some and then taped the center to force it longer for the body and taped the other pieces together. Then it was off to the store to buy an unidentifiable paper to leave no trace of where it came from. "USA TODAY" was perfect for this. I also needed flour but not knowing anything about it, I thought for sure one bag should be plenty...yea right. Turns out I made three trips to the store to buy flour before I finished. And paper, well it takes a lot more of that too than I expected, so I had to get creative. The middle layers of the project are old phone books and the outer layer were actually thick brown paper from empty fertilizer bags. Who knew they could be so useful.



Everything seemed to be progressing well but it took so long for each layer of new paper to dry that I began to wonder if this was a good idea or not. The entire project was still very fragile after several layers of paper. Then it came to me... the wife was out of town to her mother's, so why not take this project inside to the central ac. There it would dry faster and I didn't sweat so much...yea that was a good idea. That was so much better and I could think better also. Another good idea came to me...I have a great heat gun that I could use to help dry the rascal faster and add more layers. I got the heat gun and set it to low, now I was cooking. I kept moving the gun to keep the warm air moving all over the project, I touched it every once in a while to see if it was hardening up.

Then it happened without warning. The belly of the beast ruptured and the balloon began to swell out of the split. OMG its going to blow!! My life flashed before my eyes. Do you have any idea what my life would have been like if that thing blew up and spewed wet paper Mache confetti everywhere in the living room? I scrambled to the freezer for ice cubes which I quickly emptied into a wet paper towel and applied to the enlarging balloon. It slowly began to recede but never went all the way back inside again. But at least it was stable and a catastrophe was avoided. Lesson learned, you can't rush paper Mache, it's a slow process. It took a couple days to reinforce the belly just to get it back to where I was. Eventually I got the final layer of fertilizer bag paper applied and it began to get 'stiff' and didn't feel so fragile. I glued black crape paper to it to provide a little texture and an appropriate color. It was starting to become fun again.



Have you guessed where this project ended up? Bet you know now.

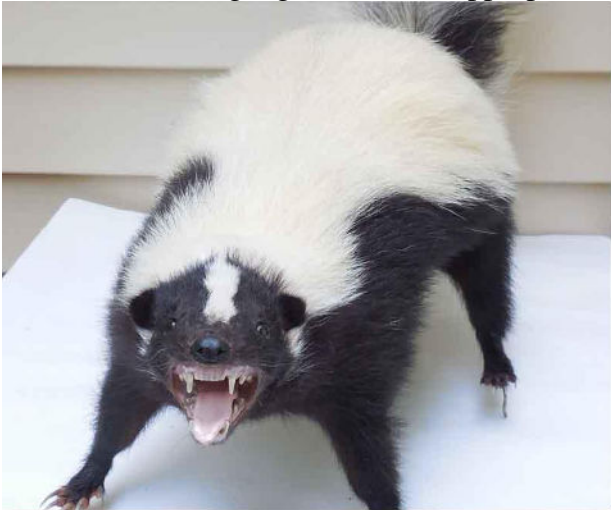


No patch critter would be complete without its own pumpkin.

After almost two weeks in development it was finally time for delivery and I wondered where the cameras would be this time around and how would I avoid them. Every once in a while you get lucky. It was my turn that day when in morning chat Paul asked me to go by his house and look at his patch. Uh..ok I can do that no problem. Just the break I needed. I could be seen on camera while spying for them. So later that day I went to Paul's house and examined his plants in both his patches while carefully looking for the cameras. Rats! He had one camera tucked away in the woods so you couldn't even get down his driveway before the camera caught you. It was hidden off the left side of the frame of the following photo. So I had to think about how to get around it.



So it was back to google to find an appropriate image for the camera. This one was perfect.



I had to trek through the woods to come up from behind the camera but it was worth it. Once "angry skunk" photo was installed it was back to the truck to get my paper Mache skunk and position it appropriately for full effect.



All I had to do then was wait for Paul to discover “my present” when he got home from work. Well the evening passed and I heard nothing. I even checked his BP diary to see if he posted anything there, nothing. I suspected morning chat would be exciting. The next morning I couldn’t wait to get into chat and see what his response would be before he went to work. I got into chat and nothing from Paul, just the normal chatter. We talked about our pumpkins and events in each of our patches but nothing from Paul. Eventually he mentioned that he abandoned the ‘front patch’ because of all its problems and that he planned to pull the plant that weekend. Well rats again. Not only did I not want to wait that long but the forecast for that day was rain. I knew one thing for sure and that was that the skunk would not survive the rain. I couldn’t let two weeks of planning and work be ruined by the rain so after Paul went to work it was back to Paul’s house.

The tail had fallen so I did a quick repair. After that it didn’t take long to relocate the skunk and his pumpkin to the ‘house patch’ where it would be sure to be seen. I didn’t take any chances this time so I covered it with clear plastic wrap to rain proof it.



No respectable skunk would be caught without a smell of its own. The spray bottle in the lower right corner of above phot was used to apply a healthy dose of Dr. Bronner’s Pure Castile Soap which provides a strong smell of peppermint. (it also helps keep various bugs away)

Like I mentioned earlier, this was like a bad infomercial and if you order now.... I couldn’t leave his ‘front patch’ to be abandoned this early in the season without a going away present. I had just the thing for it now that the plant was to be pulled. What could do the job better than a little something from ACME. I placed this one near the driveway so it couldn’t be missed. “ACME small pest removal” on one side and “1000 Tons” on the other.



Signed,
Rodents Of Unusual Size

VGPGA ANNUAL WINTER MEETING..... SAVE THE DATE!!!!!!

The Annual Vermont Giant Pumpkin Growers winter meeting will be held Saturday February 9, 2019 at the Comfort Inn & Suites at Maplewood in Berlin, Vermont (Exit 7 off I-89). (Their address is; 213 Paine Turnpike North, Berlin, VT 05602, telephone (802) 229-2222.)

The meeting will begin at 10:00 AM and a light lunch consisting of deli platters, sandwiches, chips, soda and water will be available at noon. The club is asking for a **\$5.00 per person donation at the meeting for the lunch this year**, to help defray some of the event expenses.

The offices of club president and secretary will be decided, if you are interested in either position please contact a club director/officer for more information. Please consider volunteering for either 2yr term, we welcome your participation.

Featured guest speaker; Our very own Matt DeBacco is scheduled to present even more knowledge to us about growing Atlantic Giant Pumpkins! (If you have something specific about growing Atlantic Giant Pumpkins that you would like more information about let us know ASAP.)

Please let us know you if are coming by emailing vermontgpg@hotmail.com or you can telephone: Dan Boyce @ 802-537-4775.

Over the last several years some of us have stayed over Saturday night at the hotel and enjoyed dinner at Applebee's as well as some lively pumpkin conversation. If you would like to stay overnight you can make a reservation by contacting the Comfort Inn directly, at the telephone number listed above, mention that you are attending The Vermont Giant Pumpkin Growers winter meeting and you will receive 20% off your room rate. Hope to see you there!

P.S. Comfort Inn Hotel & Conference Center link below.

<https://www.choicehotels.com/vermont/montpelier/comfort-inn-hotels/vt004?pmf=yext&mc=llyxyxpx>

Thanks to the generosity of Bart Toftness the Michael Strange Award was established to payout prize money for the 21st place pumpkin. For the first annual award it was only fitting that there was a tie, so two pumpkin growers received \$50.



Ralph Bell (1st year grower) and Jenna Baird (first VGPGA weigh-off) tied for 21st place, and even more fitting, Mike's pumpkin came in 22nd with his first pumpkin over 600 pounds! Mike started the seeds, Peter Jones planted the seedlings and Gail pollinated the pumpkin, a true team effort.



VERMONT'S FIRST ONE TON PUMPKIN!†



2,017.5 Boyce
2018

Second Place at Topsfield Fair and New State Record – Congratulations Dan and Holly!
Benson, VT

VGPGA ANNUAL SEED SWAP WE NEED YOUR SEEDS!

Our annual Vermont Giant Pumpkin Growers seed exchange for members will be happening soon!

Dan & Holly Boyce and a few friends have volunteered to put membership bubbles together, but they need seeds! The exchange can be a very nice mid-winter surprise when the club bubble full of seeds arrives in your mailbox. Please help by contributing some of your pumpkin and other veggie seeds.

REMEMBER, you don't have to be a 1000 pound plus pumpkin grower to contribute great genetics so please consider sharing your pumpkin or any other Giant Vegetable Seeds with other club members.

There are about 60 members, so send what you can spare. We certainly understand that you may not be able to provide enough for all members. Please prepackage your seeds; You can use coin envelopes from Staples to package the seeds, but any craft store or Walmart will have small plastic envelopes to package them. We are not looking for professional packaging, they just need to be clearly marked with the weight of the pumpkin or other vegetable, your name and the parents of the pumpkin or other vegetable if you have that information. So, if you have seeds and are willing to share, please mail them to;

**Dan Boyce
152 RTE 144
Benson, Vermont 05743**

Thanks in advance for your seed contribution and for supporting the club!!

New Vermont State Record Bushel Gourd:



Congratulations Mike Cole – Castleton, VT