THE PRIMARY VINE

SPRING/SUMMER 2019

Word from the President: **It's all in "purse"spective**

With all of the recent success of growing huge pumpkins in greenhouses (with pumped in C02 and who knows what else is involved), along with Mother Nature's decision to give us a crap summer so far, it is hard for most of us growers to not throw out the phrase: UNFAIR!

Has our hobby become too expensive for us? Do we need to adopt the methods taught to us by world class growers using expensive fungicides, pesticides and supplements not to mention greenhouses?

But wait, we need to all look back at history and where this hobby came from. Howard Dill was a pioneer of a gardener from Nova Scotia, Canada with a dream and a breeding strategy that started the line of pumpkins that we all nurture today. Often, we spend more time with these silly little plants then we do with our children or spouses. Some growers even name the pumpkins and get so attached that they actually shed a tear if something goes wrong.

There is just something about growing a huge pumpkin (huge is in the eye of the grower) that gardeners are just enthralled with. The size of the leaves, the massive vines and lastly a fruit that grows like no other. How many times in your life can you witness a fruit growing 10, 20, 30 or even 50 pounds a day? What is the first thing the neighbors ask you about in the summer and fall?

Giant pumpkins are special. The people that patiently tend to them are special and what makes our growing community great. I see this hobby moving in different paths which is ok by me, as there is plenty of room for every type of grower. You don't have to spend a lot to fully enjoy the journey and make many lifelong friends. But if you do have the means and are looking at a greenhouse set up with all the trimmings, that is ok as well.

Remember a bad day gardening is better than a good day working. Now go out and get your hands dirty!

John Young

MEET THE MEMBERS

(The featured member this issue is Jenna Baird. He has been a member since 2013. Jenna grew her personal best last year, 631 lbs.)

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

I live in Chittenden, Vermont on my family's farm and have lived here for 28 years excluding about five and a half years when I was in college and traveling out west.

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

I make and sell maple syrup. My parents own the production side of our maple farm so I work for them making the syrup (tapping trees, boiling, woods work etc). My partner Jacob and I own the retail part of the maple business on the farm. We manage the website, give maple tours, host events, and ship syrup across the US daily.

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

I have been with my partner Jacob for 13 years. We are not yet married. My family has a German Shepherd that mostly lives at my parent's house but loves to have sleepovers at our house every now and then.
Other hobbies include: Gardening other veggies and flowers besides pumpkins, growing houseplants, cut flower arranging, hiking, kayaking, swimming, camping, and photography.

How many years have you been growing giants?

This year will be my 5th year growing giants.

How did you get interested in growing giants?

My dad grew a couple of giant pumpkins back in the day – and I always kind of wanted to grow one. I was at the Rutland Fair and met Dan Boyce who gave me a seed that I kept in the freezer and the following year tried it out. I've been addicted ever since.

What do you like most about growing giants?

I love sharing the experience with other people. I grow my pumpkins right next to our sugarhouse/maple store where we get syrup customers year round. I love showing folks the pumpkin throughout the summer and having it displayed near our sign when the growing season is over. I also have greatly enjoyed connecting with other growers – what a friendly and supportive group of people.

What is your biggest challenge or obstacle in growing?

Every year there is a new unexpected challenge. Last year was a battle with a rotting stem and wind, the year before – squash vine borers etc. etc.

Do you have any help in the patch?

I always get help from my mom Bonnie and partner Jacob if I am away. It's always helpful to have someone around to do the watering if I can't be there. I have had a HUGE amount of help from Matt DeBacco and Dan Boyce last year. Matt via e-mail and Dan was able to come up to our farm and help give some suggestions in the patch. I call them my pumpkin coaches.

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

Last year was the first year that I buried the vines. I know that had a huge impact on an increase in weight. Prior to last year, my biggest pumpkin was 350lbs and last year I hit 631 lbs. Each year I plan on adding something new to my growing process. This year is drip irrigation.

Any words of advice for new growers?

Biggest word of advice would be, don't be afraid to ask for help. Anyone in the VGPGA I'm sure would be more than happy to offer help. I only had a better year last year because I reached out to fellow growers for advice. And most importantly HAVE FUN!

08/03/2019 - Save the date! The Annual Summer BBQ and Patch Tour will take place Saturday August 3rd , 2019 at Jenna Baird's, Baird's Family Farm in Chittenden, Vermont. Typical start time is 10:00AM but keep an eye out for email with further details. RSVP by emailing us at vermontgpg@hotmail.com.

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: How do you make pumpkin pie?

A: Take the circumference of the pumpkin and divide it by the diameter of the pumpkin.

Q: What do you call death by falling pumpkin?

A: Gourd to death.

Dan and Holly Boyce attended the Annual GPC meeting, from Dan:

GPC Conference March 2019

The GPC convention was held this year at Lambeau Field in Green Bay, Wisconsin. Lots of fun for Holly and me to meet new folks and visit with our old friends. We got to tour Lambeau Stadium, attend trainings about growing giant pumpkins etc. The convention culminated with the awards banquet. Congratulations to Ken Derosiers, of Big Pumpkins.com, for receiving the Vine of Honor Award and to all the other folks that received awards. The GPC now has a newsletter that is available at https://gpc1.org/newsletter/. The spring edition is packed with information about the conference.

The New England coalition.

At the winter meeting in February John Young was voted in as President (two year term), Ann Squires was renewed again as Treasurer and Holly Boyce was voted in as Secretary.

Happy Fourth of July and good luck growing!
We'll see you at the BBQ