

# M A G P G

THE ORANGE PAGES  
SUMMER 2013



# M A G P G

## *Words from the Prez*

**Another summer of heartbreaks-** Here we are again right in the middle of summer and it has been another one of those years in the eastern US. Why is it that every single year it's either too hot, too cold, too dry, too wet... is there ever a good season for growing pumpkins? I've been at this nine years now and I think it's pretty safe to say no. But it is our ability to master our environment, to push through the obstacles and come out on top that keeps us coming back, and makes us the absolute best at what we do.



This isn't container gardening. It's not a flower garden and it sure as hell has nothing to do with planting three hard stem pumpkin seeds in a mound of dirt and thinning the plants out to the best one. Whether your opponent is yourself, Mother Nature, your friend down the street or those guys at the weighoff, this is the biggest gardening competition in the world. The challenges are great and the rewards are greater. You alone get to load that baby up into the bed of your truck, drive it down the road and make that kid in the front yard drop

the lollypop out of his mouth when you pass by. Pull into the weighoff, drop that gate and rejoin the exclusive fraternity that is comprised of the best growers, and the best people, in the world.

**Let's talk about selling some pumpkins-** There are a lot of strong opinions about prize money and selling pumpkins. Those who wish to keep their pumpkins and display for the neighborhood to enjoy are more than welcome. Even better if you are willing to donate your pumpkin to a noble cause. I for one feel entitled to get a return on my investment, provided I can find the right buyer. It is a strange market and there really is no way to make any sort of living selling giants, but you can certainly pad your pockets. It is great to have a little extra spending cash as the holidays approach. If you are open to the idea of selling your pumpkins after the weighoffs, I invite you to consider the following ideas in order to maximize your profitability. **1)** Grow orange producing pumpkin seeds. There is no bigger factor in determining the \$/ pound of your pumpkin than color and shape. **2)** Weighoffs are the absolute worst place to sell your pumpkin. Anyone who can grasp the concept of supply and demand can easily see that when a lot of pumpkins are present in the same area, the less yours will

be worth. If you are engaged about selling your pumpkin at a weighoff, set a price and be prepared to walk away. Additionally, selling at the weighoff strips you of your victory parade home with the pumpkin proudly displayed in the bed of your pickup truck. **3)** Garden centers are the best place to sell your pumpkins. A giant pumpkin at the front of the shop is great curb appeal and gets customers interested enough to stop in. There are several businesses in my area that I sell to. Because of the added benefit of being displayed somewhat locally, and long distance delivery is limited, I can extend a better price to these buyers. **4)** Don't be afraid to charge a delivery fee for your pumpkin. You would not expect

Lowe's to deliver a 1,000lb refrigerator for free and nor should your buyer expect a pumpkin to be transported to them for free either. A brief explanation of how much goes into getting one on your truck is generally enough to eliminate the debate. For me, a delivery within a 45 minute drive one way will usually cost about \$100. A delivery to a 2-hour one way destination is usually about \$200 extra dollars. I hope these tips help you to have a better experience selling your pumpkin. Have a fun during the remainder of the growing season, and I'll see you at the weighoffs!

**Jim Gerhardt**

**President, MAGPG**

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## Monster Pumpkin Madness 2013!

Monster Pumpkin Madness this year is September 28th at the Delaware Valley College Farm Market on Lower State Rd. in Doylestown, PA as always. The MAGPG continues our tradition of offering a \$1500 top prize for the largest pumpkin as well as an unmatched \$500 prize for the winner of the Howard Dill Award. One change in the prize structure this year is that we've eliminated the \$100 prizes for the farthest traveled and biggest grown in Bucks County, and instead added \$100 prizes for the biggest watermelon and field pumpkin in an effort to attract different vegetables to the competition. The weekend will be filled with all the usual attractions - corn maze, pumpkin picking, vendors, animals, amazing food, bounce rides for the kids among other things - all put on by the Fleming family, owners of Shady Brook Farm. Pumpkin unloading for the competitors is from 8 to 10 AM and the competition begins at 1 PM, so tell all your friends and neighbors and we'll see you at the Madness!

# Weigh-Off Time!

Sat, September 14, 2013

## Roba Family Farms

GPC Member since 2011

### Address:

Decker Rd  
Dalton, Pennsylvania  
18414  
United States  
Telephone: (570) 563-2904



Place	Pumpkin	Place	Squash	<b>2013 Prize Money and Event Details</b>  \$100 Bonus bonus for farthest traveled \$100 Bonus bonus for heaviest by kids (16 and under) \$100 Bonus bonus for heaviest local fruit  Registration & Unloading Time: 7:30 - 9:30am, weighing starts at Noon, with awards immediately after.  Entry Fee: \$20/ fruit (2 Free Admissions with each entry fee, all others \$10.95)
1	\$2000	1	\$500	
2	\$1000	2	\$150	
3	\$800	3	\$100	
4	\$500			
5	\$400			
6	\$150			
7	\$100			
8	\$50			
9	\$50			
10	\$50			

Sat, September 21, 2013

## Cooperstown Pumpkinfest and Regatta

GPC Member since 2005

### Address:

Doubleday Field Lot  
Cooperstown, New York 13326  
United States



Place	Pumpkin	Place	Squash
1	<b>\$2000</b>	1	<b>\$500</b>
2	<b>\$1000</b>	2	<b>\$150</b>
3	<b>\$800</b>	3	<b>\$100</b>
4	<b>\$500</b>		
5	<b>\$400</b>		
6	<b>\$150</b>		
7	<b>\$100</b>		
8	<b>\$50</b>		
9	<b>\$50</b>		
10	<b>\$50</b>		

### 2013 Prize Money and Event Details

**\$250 Bonus** top NY grown pumpkin and/or squash if it is a new NY State Record.

Otsego County Pumpkins: 1st place: \$200 + Certificate; 2nd place: \$100; 3rd place: \$50

**Registration & Unloading Time:** 8am - 10am, weighing starts at 10am

Other fruit (giant tomato, watermelon, long gourd, field pumpkin) 1st each category - \$30 Chamber of Commerce gift certificate.

**Entry Fee:** \$20, no matter how many categories or pumpkins entered.

Sat, September 28, 2013

## Monster Pumpkin Madness

GPC Member since 2010

### Address:

2100 Lower State Rd.  
Doylestown,  
Pennsylvania 18901  
United States  
Telephone: 215-230-7170



Place	Pumpkin	Place	Squash	<b>2013 Prize Money and Event Details</b> Registration & Unloading: <b>9am- 11am</b> Weighing starts at <b>1PM</b> , Awards at <b>4PM</b>  Entry Fee: <b>\$10.00</b>  <b>\$500</b> bonus for Howard Dill Award. <b>\$200</b> bonus for farthest traveled. <b>\$100</b> each for top melon and field pumpkin.  All giant pumpkin growers and pumpkins must stay till end of awards. Growers are encouraged to leave pumpkins on display.
1	<b>\$1500</b>	1	<b>\$200</b>	
2	<b>\$750</b>	2	<b>\$100</b>	
3	<b>\$500</b>			
4	<b>\$250</b>			
5	<b>\$150</b>			
6	<b>\$75</b>			
7	<b>\$50</b>			
8	<b>\$40</b>			
9	<b>\$30</b>			
10	<b>\$20</b>			

Sat, October 5, 2013

**The PGPGA Great Pumpkin Weigh Off**

GPC Premium Member, since 1996

**Address:**

2600 Plank Road Commons  
Altoona, Pennsylvania 16602  
United States

Telephone: 814-695-7010



Place	Pumpkin	Squash	<p><b>2013 Prize Money and Event Details</b></p> <p>First Place Watermelon - <b>\$100</b>                      First Place Tomato - <b>\$50</b>                      First Place Long Gourd - <b>\$50</b>                      First Place Field Pumpkin - <b>\$25</b>                      Plaques for:</p> <p>Pumpkin: 1st-15th                      Squash: 1st-3rd                      Watermelon: 1st-3rd                      Tomato: 1st-3rd                      Long Gourd: 1st-3rd                      Field Pumpkins: 1st - 3rd</p> <p><b>Unloading Time:</b> 8:00am to 9:00am  <b>Paid membership required.</b></p>
1	<b>\$1500</b>	<b>\$200</b>	
2	<b>\$750</b>	<b>\$100</b>	
3	<b>\$500</b>	<b>\$25</b>	
4	<b>\$250</b>		
5	<b>\$100</b>		
6th-10th	<b>\$50</b>		
11th-15th	<b>Plaque</b>		

# Organic Talk with Alex McCracken

It's been another challenging summer weather-wise here in the mid-Atlantic region with well above average rainfall including quite a few 3 to 5 inch downpours in many areas. As a result, disease pressure has been extremely high which makes organic growing even more difficult than normal. My own plants have had more leaf-stem rot than ever, which often begins when a strong storm breaks the leaf stems, allowing water to enter and fill up the hollow center. I try to remove broken leaves as quickly as possible, but inevitably with work and other responsibilities rot spreads outwards to adjacent leaves and is difficult to stop when the weather remains hot and humid. One of my plants has now lost almost 50% of its original leaf mass, which has led me to allow a lot of tertiaries to grow to fill in the open spaces. While not the ideal situation, this strategy does seem to be working as the pumpkin continues to grow at a decent pace. The plants that seem to be most affected by leaf stem rot are the densest ones, with secondaries very close together. Next year I'm going to try to space them out more, removing secondaries as necessary to create better air flow between leaves and prevent "the domino effect" - when a few broken leaves fall over into adjacent ones breaking them as well. My theory as it pertains to overall plant potential is that leaves and roots grow larger when given more space, so I suspect having a few less secondaries will not limit pumpkin growth as long as it leads to an overall healthier plant for the duration of the season. We shall see.



**Alex's all-organic pumpkin patch**



**Alex's stump covers**

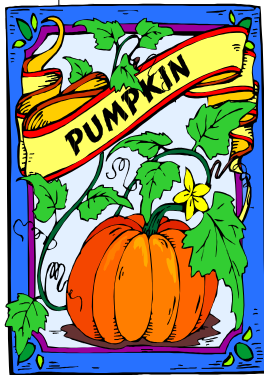
On a positive note, my new stump covers and extra fans are working wonders this year as I still have every stump intact and looking great into early August, something I've never accomplished before. They are simply a 2 ft. by 3 ft. piece of plywood on 24 inch wooden legs. The covers are a bit wobbly, leaning to the side during windstorms so I'll be adding some cross-braces for next season to keep them straight. You'll never see an uncovered pumpkin stump again in the McCracken patch after late June."



## ODDS AND ENDS

**Reminder:  
\$500.00  
Bonus paid  
to the 2013  
Doylestown  
Howard Dill  
Winner!**

Past winners:  
921.5 Rosa  
811 Gerhardt  
611 Miller



Who will win the \$250.00 bonus for the largest official pumpkin grown from the 1524 Fulk in 2013? We'll find out soon enough!

**Pumpkin Weddings! This year Jim Gerhardt will marry Melissa Fritzing on September 6<sup>th</sup> and Kevin Snyder and Vanessa Johnson will be wed on September 14<sup>th</sup>! We wish them all the best!**



Prototype carving for Gerhardt Wedding

### Leadership Team

President-Jim Gerhardt  
VP-Alex McCracken  
Treasurer-Tim Rosa  
Presidential Advisor-Kevin Snyder

The Doylestown weighoff will have cash prizes for field pumpkins and watermelons this year!

Have something for the newsletter? Let us know and we will make sure it makes it in the next issue!



# Featured Grower

This issue's featured club grower is Norm Gansert, a member of the 1,400 pound club and an avid orange pumpkin enthusiast. Thanks Norm for taking the time to share with us!

## 1. How many years have you been growing giant pumpkins, and do you grow anything else in your gardens?

I have been growing giant pumpkins since 1998, my brother-in-law brought over a burpee prize winner plant. I grew about a 150 lb pumpkin off a totally unmanaged plant and I was hooked. I didn't learn about plant management for a few years. I also grow tomatoes for me and a neighbor.

## 2. How many pumpkin plants do you grow each year? What is your heaviest pumpkin to date?

I usually grow 6 plants but last year there were 8 this year I am a bit out of control with 11.. My heaviest pumpkin was 1441.5 in 2010.

## 3. You are really into making your own compost. What % of your total organic patch additives does the compost make up each year? What are some do's and don'ts for growers making their own compost? What other organic materials do you use to amend your soil in the spring and fall?

I make my own compost from horse and cow manure, leaves and grass clippings from my neighbors.. In the fall old pumpkins, hay bales, old plants all go into the pile. This is basically all the organic matter I use in my garden. In the spring after a soil test I usually end up adding some 0-0-50 to get my potassium in the 300 range.. I am a low budget grower, I try to keep expenses to a minimum..

#### **4. What type of soil do you have in your patch?**

My soil is sandy to a slight gravelly loam.

#### **5. What is the gradient on that massive hill of yours and do you have to do anything special to keep your round pumpkins from rolling down it?**

The hill that I grow on looks much worse than it actually is. Only in the spring when it is time to till does it pose problems for an old guy, the rest of the time it is fine. I have to make a shelf under my pumpkins to level them off a bit, I have to build a shelf under my pumpkins but that is no big deal.



Mount Gansert

#### **6. What is your fungicide and insecticide program (types of chemicals, rate and frequency of application, and method of application)?**

I use Warrior and I mix up the fungicides between Quintec, Infuse, Companion and T Storm. I try to spray weekly and use a Stihl mister which I am trying to get adjusted to..

#### **7. What types of fertilizer do you use during the beginning, middle and end of the growing season? Is there anything else you recommend adding (Myco, Cal-carb, Azos, compost tea, that sort of thing?)**

I have only used fish and seaweed in the past during the season. This year I had a nitrate test done and depending on the results I may add some blood meal.. I also spray the plants with compost tea about twice a month..I use two lbs of myco a year and that is about it.

**8. What do you believe the ideal plant size is, and how much water do you typically use on a full sized plant?**

My plants on average are between 600 and 750 sq ft.

**9. The age-old question: What is most important, orange or big???**

I water overhead and run sprinklers about 15 mins a plant during the hottest part of the season..

Big is nice but I think ORANGE RULES..

**10. When do you typically start your seeds? When are they put out into the patch? Do you use any early season protection from wind and cold?**

I usually start my seeds April 25th but this year I was a few days early, They go in the ground as soon as they have the first true leaf. They all have a simple 4 x 4 cold frame for early spring protection.

**11. What do you think will be the hottest 2012 seeds after this year's growing season in both the orange and the big & ugly categories?**

As far as the best seeds, who knows.. There are so many good ones that will never get proven because they don't have the right name after the number. the 1140 Finders is proof. Who would have thought a non HH seed would have grown a world record. As for orange I am a big fan of the 1059 and 723 Kaczynski..

