



*Special points of interest:*

- Wellington Pumpkinfest will be held on October 17th 2009.
- New enhanced prize list for Wellington, including a \$500 first Prize.
- Provincial Cosmetic pesticide ban comes into effect April 22nd 2009

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# Prince Edward County Pumpkin Growers

## Spring Newsletter

Volume 13, Issue 1

Spring 2009

### Seed Starting Just Around the Corner

It will soon be time to start your pumpkin seeds for the 2009 season. Whether you are growing your own seeds, choosing one from the PECPG seed sale or picking one of the great seeds distributed in the GVGO seed distribution packets, your chances have never been better to pick a top seed.

Many growers start their seeds around April 25th, with plans to set out in early May. There is no question that an early start is critical to finishing the season with a new personal best.

The largest pumpkin in Ontario last year was grown

by Darrell Leonard of Wyevale ON, With his 1395.5 Leonard.



Darrell Leonard and his 1395

Darrell says he always starts his seeds in late April or early May, but doesn't set them out until after the May 24th weekend. Darrell transplants his seedlings into

large 5 gallon pots and prefers a huge plant at set out time.

Thad Starr of Pleasant Hill Oregon, has grown 2 pumpkins over 1500 lbs over the last two seasons. Thad tries to keep his seedlings in pots as short a time as possible, from a week to 10 days max. Thad says the only reason to pot the seedlings at all is to determine which direction the plant will grow.

Whenever you decide to set out, resist the urge to start seeds in early April. Plants started too early will become root bound and stunted.

Good luck and good growing in 2009!

### Wellington Weigh off Climbs in Top 10 average

In 2007, PEC Pumpkinfest and the Wellington weigh off became a GPC (Great Pumpkin Commonwealth) sanctioned site. That fall we finished in 24th place of 46 GPC sites reporting with a top 10 site average of 953.9 lbs.

This year 2008, we moved up to 18th of 67 GPC sites

reporting with a top 10 average of 998.6 lbs, just shy of 1000 lbs!

2009 should prove to be our best year ever as we look for our top 10 average to exceed 1000 lbs.

It was in 1996 that PEC's own Bill Greer Grew the first 1000 lb pumpkin in the world. Bill would be proud to

see where we have come with our weigh off!

Wellington continues to be one of the most popular weigh offs in Ontario and draws growers from all over East Central Ontario and Western Quebec.

Mark your calendar now for October 17th! Be sure to arrive early for the parade, where thousands of people line up to cheer on the giants.

## PECPG Seed Sale a Roaring Success



Harley Sproule jumps for joy with his 2008 Wellington win with 1343.4 lbs.

*Mark your calendar for October 17th for Ontario's premier Giant Pumpkin weigh-off in Wellington ON*

This past winter, the PECPG once again held its annual fund raising seed sale. Featuring seeds from the top 5 pumpkins at Wellington's last fall's weigh off. As well this year we offered some proven seeds for sale individually.

The sale was nothing less than a total success, completely selling out of the promo packets by the end of January.

This is a testament to the growers and the quality of the genetics being offered.

Seeds were sold to growers all over North America and Europe. With one packet even going to Korea!

Unfortunately, due to demand we were unable to fill all requests for packets this year. Be sure to order your packet early

next year to ensure you get yours.

We still have some of the proven seeds for sale. Check out the list at:

[www.gvgo.ca](http://www.gvgo.ca)

We would like to thank all those who purchased and the growers who donated seeds and made this years sale an overwhelming success.

## Geared up for 2009 Wellington Pumpkinfest

The stage is set for the 13th annual Prince Edwards County Pumpkinfest at Wellington Ontario. This year the festival will be held on Saturday October 17th, 2009.

### Schedule of events (Tentative)

Pancake Breakfast 8:00am

Parade of the Giants 10:30 AM (everyone welcome to participate as well as watch.

Craft Tables, food booths, church meals from noon on,

Contests, children's games and entertainment from noon to 4:30pm

Weigh off begins at 12:30 at C.M.L. Snider Public School

## Arnold Vader inducted in Hall of Fame

Arnold Vader and his 2005 Bill Greer memorial Award



PEC's own Arnold Vader was inducted in the GVGO Hall of fame at their AGM on April 4th. Arnold was recognized for his contributions to the sport over the

years. Arnold Continues to grow big pumpkins making it almost look easy. Arnold also continues to support the club and participates annually in the Wellington weigh off as well as attending Port Elgin Pumpkinfest.

Behind every great man there is an even greater women. Arnolds wife Mary has worked very hard as well, volunteering time each fall at the weigh off and even growing some big pumpkins herself.

Way to go Arnold and Mary!

# New 2009 Prize List

## 2009 Prize List

First heaviest pumpkin ..... **\$500.00 \***  
 Second heaviest pumpkin ... **\$300.00 \***  
 Third heaviest pumpkin ..... **\$200.00 \***  
 Fourth heaviest pumpkin ... **\$50.00**  
 Fifth heaviest pumpkin ... **\$40.00**  
 Sixth heaviest pumpkin ... **\$30.00**  
 Seventh to tenth heaviest pumpkin ... **\$25.00**

Eleventh to fifteenth heaviest.....**\$20**

Bill Greer Memorial Prize for heaviest pumpkin grown in Prince Edward County ... **\$200.00**

Heaviest squash ... **\$100.00**, Second heaviest squash ...**\$50.00** Third **\$25.00**

Howard Dill Award...**\$100 \***

Tallest sunflower (no entry fee required) ... **\$15.00**

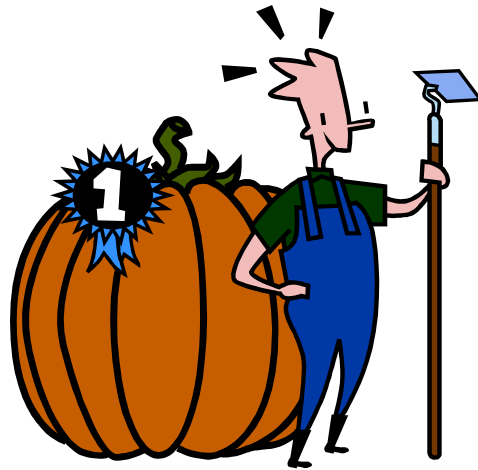
Second tallest sunflower ... **\$10.00**

Heaviest pumpkin entered by a first time grower ... Merchandise

Largest Pumpkin by a 4-H member.....**\$50**

Long Gourd, 1st **\$50.00**, 2nd **\$30.00** 3<sup>rd</sup> to 5<sup>th</sup>..**\$20.00 \***

\* Denotes new or change



## Prince Edward County Pumpkin Growers Rules & Regulations

1. Pumpkins may only be weighed by the current members of the Prince Edward County Pumpkin Growers Association. Membership is \$15.00 per year and will entitle the member to enter one pumpkin, squash or long gourd. Additional vegetable entries will be \$5.00 per entry. Dues are payable at the weigh-off

2. The specimen must have been grown and cared for by the grower who must be present to win. Only 1 cash prize per member in each category, not including Grower's and Bill Greer Memorial prize.

3. As members of the Great Pumpkin Confederation, GPC, their rules will apply for weighing pumpkins and squash. Fruit weighed in other competitions will not be eligible for prizes. Please check out the complete GPC Rules at: [www.greatpumpkincommonwealth.com/PDF/Rules%202009.pdf](http://www.greatpumpkincommonwealth.com/PDF/Rules%202009.pdf)

4. Squash will be classified as follows- 100% of the following colors or color combinations green, blue, and gray. The surface area of the fruit as grown in the garden, not including the portion that was in contact with, or close proximity to the ground will be considered. This area will include the area between the ribs, around the stem, and the blossom end. This will not include any netting (cantaloping), any discoloration caused by the close proximity to the ground, or minimal amounts of white striping or mottling associated with some squash.

5. Upon entering a pumpkin or squash, the grower agrees to donate 100 seeds from their pumpkin if requested for the annual fundraising seed sale.

## Foliar Seaweed



Regular applications of seaweed can substantially improve resistance to disease

*“Seeds that take more than 4 days to germinate exhibit poor vigour and should be discarded”*

Bill Greer

Rapid germination is important to developing a strong seedling



Kelp and seaweed fertilizers have increased substantially in use by giant pumpkin growers over the last several years. Seaweed contains a complex matrix of nutrients and plant growth hormones.

These growth hormones include Auxins, Cytokinins and gibberellins.

Regular foliar application can induce a systemic

acquired response, which is basically resistance to a range of diseases and insects as well as improve plant hardiness and resistance to adverse environmental conditions such as extreme heat, frost or drought.

We apply liquid seaweed as a 1-2% (1.5-3 oz per gal) solution, starting right from emergence and continuing on a weekly basis,

increasing the concentration after fruit set.

We purchase our seaweed from Neptune's Harvest, through the GVGO's group purchase each spring, but I have seen other seaweed products available in some of the big box stores, Canadian Tire and in garden centers. Seaweed products are also available through Bio-Ag in Wellesley ON  
1-800-363-5278

## Seed Starting 101

Reprinted and modified from the April 2006, Pumpkin Watch Newsletter

It makes sense to be nervous about the germination of these seeds, because the *Atlantic Giant* pumpkin seed can be tricky to sprout. This stems from the fact that a competition seed came from a competition pumpkin, and that pumpkin received special treatment that produced very large and thick seeds. The size and thickness of AG seeds make them particularly hard to consistently germinate.

There are several methods that giant pumpkin growers use to improve their chances of germination. All growers do not use all of these methods, but no grower just starts a seed without some initial preparation.

Methods include: filing the edges of the seed to reveal the seed leaves, presoaking

the seeds for eight to twelve hours in plain water or alternately a mild seaweed or hydrogen peroxide solution, pre-germinating between moist paper towels, and a variety of other methods that all introduce water and heat in an accelerated way to quickly germinate their seeds.

The key to success is wrapped in the word, "quick." Germination times that exceed 5-7 days will likely result in seed rot, so all of these methods help to shorten the time that the seed spends in moist, heated, starting media.

The media should be soilless mix, slightly moist – not wet, and the media temperature should be between 80-90 degrees Fahrenheit. With seed edges filed, moisture quickly enters the seed cavity starting the activation of the seed embryo. That embryo is at the pointed end of the seed, so be careful when filing that you do not disturb it.

Provide bottom heat by way of a germination mat, or any homemade contraption you can conjure to provide the 80-90 degrees. Use a soil or meat thermometer, and evaluate temperature and moisture at least every eight hours.

You should start your seeds 30 days ahead of your last frost date, if you have built a cloche (mini greenhouse) to house your seedling. If not, start your seeds a week before your anticipated last frost.

I usually start my seeds in 3" peat pots, transplanting into 1.5 gal pots at about 1 week

Plan on having your seedlings transplanted into your patch within 10-14 days from starting your seeds.

95% of the time, plants will run in the opposite direction to the first true leaf. It is advantageous to set the transplant in the planting hole at a slight angle to encourage the main to run in the desired direction.



# The Spider Pattern by John Vincent

Giant pumpkin growers have experimented with vine patterns for years with each grower adding his own twist.

One of the newer patterns that is becoming widely adapted by growers is what is called the "Spider Pattern". This pattern is designed to allow for much longer secondary vines before the fruit and more square feet of plant.

As illustrated below, the plant is set further into the patch than you would with a standard Christmas tree. The first few secondary vines are drawn back towards the corners of the patch. Tertiary vines are allowed to grow back from the first secondary, filling in the space behind the stump.

After about three sets of vines, the secondary's are turned to grow parallel to

the main. Usually the objective is to have 5 to 6 sets of secondary's before the pumpkin, with few if any after the fruit. Some growers will end the main right at the fruit while other will let it continue to grow, turning it to create the last secondary at the end of the patch.

The objective is to have most of the plant before the pumpkin, grown out by fruit set in early July. The Pumpkin is set no less than 10' out from the stump, and preferably 13-15 feet out.

There are many Heavy Hitters using this pattern today or a modification of it with plots of 7-800 ft2 per plant quickly becoming the norm.

In the example below, a plot this size results in approximately 500 ft2 behind the fruit. This produces significantly more

root development and reduce your nutrient and moisture uptake.

It is recommended to bury all vines, preferably with compost. Burying vines encourages rapid development of the secondary root system. It also helps prevent infection of the dreaded squash vine borer and also anchors the vines and reduced wind damage.

In my experience, if you have a hot spell in mid to late June, before the secondary root system is fully developed, the plant will wilt severely in the mid day heat. This "flagging" is much less, once the root system on established.

We prefer to trench ahead of the vines as much as possible, except if pumpkin roots are starting to be disturbed. Trenching helps to direct the vines, where you want them to grow. It also reduces how much you have to handle them later on.

root mass than a standard Christmas tree pattern.

Growing a big pumpkin is all about the roots and developing large root systems before the pumpkin, early in the season is essential to getting above average weights.

Walking boards are very important to be used to access the stump area and accessing the pumpkin. The compaction from the weight of your feet can significantly restrict

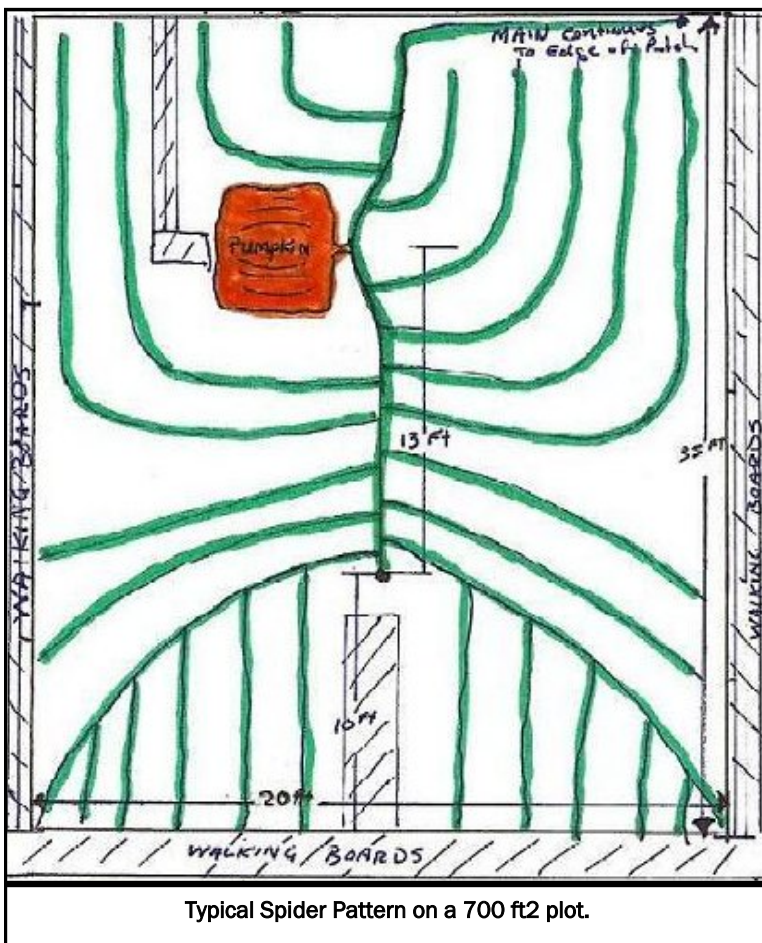
A couple of years ago a grower showed me how to 'pinch off' the tertiary vines and tendrils when they were still very small. This practice significantly reduces the amount of work required later removing these with a knife. I try to go over every plant, every few days, removing all of these buds as they develop and extending the trenches. Once a or twice a week, I try to catch up and get all the vines buried.

Another material you may have heard of is Mycorrhizal fungi. This is a naturally occurring fungus that acts as an extension of the plants root system in the soil. The fungus colonizes the roots of the plant and then sends out miles of microscopic filaments called hyphae. Mycorrhiza can be introduced by using an inoculant at planting time and again as you bury the vines at each leaf node.

We use about 1 pound of inoculant per plant. It costs about \$11.00 per pound. The GVGO does a volume purchase of this every spring. Contact Phil Hunt at:

[gvgo@i-zoom.net](mailto:gvgo@i-zoom.net) if interested.

705-887-4835



Typical Spider Pattern on a 700 ft2 plot.



## PECPG

C/O Jim Ives  
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Phone: 613-393-3958  
E-mail: jimbo1221@kos.net

*Check out our web site:*  
<http://www.pec.on.ca/pumpkinfest/>

### Basic Growing Tips from the PECPG

- 1) Start your seeds early, April 25th to May 1st.
- 2) Always start several back up plants, choosing the best to go in the patch.
- 3) Be sure to provide enough space for each plant, 20' x 30' is ideal
- 4) Transplant out in protective clutches (mini-greenhouses) between May 10th and May 24th. Keep warm on cold nights
- 5) Burry all vines and prune away all third (tertiary) vines.
- 6) Apply foliar seaweed fertilizer weekly.
- 7) Set your pumpkin on the main vine by July 7th.
- 8) Be sure to cut the roots on the vine around the pumpkin.
- 9) Keep your pumpkin shaded at all times

**Need Seeds?** Contact John Vincent, 613-476-0405, [jvincent@madoccoop.com](mailto:jvincent@madoccoop.com)

## GVGO News

Congratulations to PECPG members John Vincent, and Brant Timm for a tie finish in the new GVGO grower of the year contest. Brant and John both finished the season with 32 points.

Membership in the GVGO includes a huge packet of seeds donated by other club members. Each year the seed packet seems to grow. This year the GVGO distributed over 18,000 seeds to the membership.

The GVGO has decided to once again run a pumpkin growing contest. This year the featured seed will be the 1156 Hunt. The 1156 is 1631.5 McKie x 1689 Jutras. How can you go wrong

with this cross folks! Every GVGO member seed packet contained 1, 1156 seed.

The prizes are as follows:

1st \$500, 2nd \$300, 3rd \$200

New for 09, the GVGO is running a squash growing contest. This is open only to GVGO Ontario members. The contest is for the largest squash grown from any GVGO member seed

1st \$300, 2nd \$200, 3rd \$100.

Membership in the GVGO is \$25 per individual or \$35 per family, per year. Your membership includes eligibility to all awards and contests offered by the club as well as voting rights and the annual seed distribution. For more information, check out the web site:

[www.gvgo.ca](http://www.gvgo.ca)

Or to:

The Giant vegetable Growers of Ontario

C/O Kirk Chenier  
1650 4th Line Rd North  
RR#2  
Lakefield, ON  
K0L 2H0

