

John Deary

First Growing Season: 1999
 Growing Area: 50' x 30' patch – 2 plants
 1999: 198.2
 2000: 302 & 466
 2001: nothing, lost everything to borers.
 2002: 695 – personal best

How I got into the giant pumpkin growing...

“One spring day in 1998, I had a conversation with a co-worker, Ken Desrosiers, about how I would like to grow some pumpkins for my son. As a result of that conversation, he gave me some extra field pumpkin seeds he had. One thing led to another, as it often does, and I never planted the seeds, but I resolved to grow a giant pumpkin the next season. This decision was reinforced later when I saw the AG that Ken had grown in his own garden that year.

“When the 1999 season began, Ken realized that I needed a nudge, so he gave me an AG seedling and a sawhorse wrapped in plastic for wind protection. Not wanting to disappoint Ken's generosity, I planted the seedling in a 6'x6' raised bed – talk about being naive. I didn't know much about gardening let alone how to grow a monster pumpkin. The plant overtook the bed in no time and began to devour the nearby lawn. Needless to say, I was hooked when I saw how fast the vines were growing. I was amazed that every night when I walked out into the garden I could see tangible growth. Although I was enamored with the progress of the vines, I almost forgot that it was really all about the pumpkin! Without knowing much at all about gardening, I was still rewarded with a beautifully shaped orange pumpkin of 198.2 lbs. and a sense of accomplishment that was unparalleled.”

Ken Desrosiers

First Growing Season: 1998
 Growing Area: 50' x 40' patch – 2 plants
 1998: 125
 1999: 302.5
 2000: 604
 2001: 625
 2002: 840 (personal best and new CT state record)

How I got into the giant pumpkin growing...

“I started growing giant pumpkins in 1998 after getting some seeds as a gift from my mother. I put them in the corner of my vegetable garden and the plant took over the garden. I was amazed at how fast they grew! I begin growing competitively in 1999, and I lost my best pumpkin with a rib split. I took the pumpkin to Alan Reynolds' house in Durham, CT., and on his scale the pumpkin weighed 457 pounds. My entry at Topsfield in 1999 weighed 305.2 pounds and finished in 87th place. Now, I was really hooked, so that fall, I sought better seeds and enlarged my garden. After losing my best pumpkin again in 2000, I finally “landed” one in 2001. It weighed 625.4 pounds and finished 28th at Topsfield, and also won the “most aesthetically challenged” [ugliest] pumpkin at the Topsfield fair. In 2002 I planted my best seeds yet, a 712 Kuhn and an 805 Pukos. Both seeds had produced pumpkins over 1000 pounds. I grew a new CT state record pumpkin of 840 pounds on the 805 Pukos plant. I named her *Wicked-Wide-Wilma* or *www* for short. My 840 finished 12th at Topsfield.



How BigPumpkins.com was born:

“We were both working at *Software Impressions* for a little over a year and had worked together prior to that at another consulting firm. Although we were good friends and accomplished web developers, we were definitely not master gardeners. Turning to the web for advice and information about our new sport, we often came up empty handed. At about the same time, we were chronicling our current season's progress on our company's web server in the form of an online diary. We wanted to show people on the internet our current progress, and let them comment on the state of our plants.

“At the close of the 1999 season, we realized that our postings would be useful for comparison purposes next season. As web developers, we also realized that this would be a great service for other growers as well – not to mention, that if we got others to utilize this service, we would be able to learn from them too. So, that winter we set out to build an online community that was user friendly and, most importantly, accessible to newcomers. The community concept is truly the heart and soul of *BigPumpkins.com* and the key to its success. Members from all over the world contribute to the site's content. It is truly the collective work of hundreds of growers.



“*BigPumpkins.com* is in its 5th season of operation, and has over 7,500 registered users. We average 840,000 hits a month, and peak with over one million hits during weigh-off season. None of it would be possible without the generous support of *Software Impressions* who hosts our server.”



BigPumpkins.com Statistics as of June, 2003

Registered users: 7,507
 Average visitors per day: 1,400
 Average hits per day: 28,583
 Total hits for all of 2002: 10,433,099

