

## The Heavy Hitters

Since my first book, *How-to-Grow World Class Giant Pumpkins*, 34 growers have earned the distinction of being called *Heavy Hitters* in this sport, and 5 of the 34 were honored again in my second book, *How-to-Grow World Class Giant Pumpkins, II*.

In this book, I decided that there would be no repeats of former *Heavy Hitters* but instead decided to honor previous honorees by including them in a special section of this chapter. There are now so many good growers in the United States and Canada, that picking any list of the most outstanding is bound to ignite heated discussion among growers – especially those loyal to their region.

As in my past books, designation of *Heavy Hitter* status has not been granted exclusively on weight of pumpkins grown, but rather on a subjective mix of variables which may include: contributions to the sport either in the management of competitions or the leadership of an association, contributions that have led to a better understanding of the growing of giant pumpkins, and those growers who have been particularly innovative or generous.

There are at least 100 growers in North America that have a legitimate claim to the distinction of being called a *Heavy Hitter*. If I tried to include them all here, this book would be little more than a *Who's Who* of the sport. Since the major emphasis of this book is to introduce new information on growing giant pumpkins and teach, not only experienced growers but inexperienced growers, it was necessary to limit the number of entries for this publication. As with my first two books, the goal has been to write a book that could stand on its own. Therefore, everything from seed starting to competing has to be touched-on so that someone new to my books can fully grasp the fundamentals of growing giant pumpkins without any previous required reading. As a result, I have whittled down a list of 100 or more growers to a list that includes just 23.

Someday, perhaps I will publish a *Who's Who in Giant Pumpkin Growing*, but for now, these 23 growers have earned the right to be recognized by all as *Heavy Hitters*.



Left and right: Charlie Houghton's world record, 2003, 1337.6: sculptured, in the patch, and on the scale at the Topsfield, MA All-New England Championship and GPC weigh off.



## Charlie Houghton 1337.6

### New Hampshire's Finest

New Hampshire giant pumpkin growers captured the first 3 places in the GPC world rankings for the year 2002. This feat boggles the mind, when you consider that all three of these pumpkins were grown within 20 miles of one another. I have seen a continuous rotation in regional superiority over the 10 years in which I have covered the sport. First it was the growers from New York, then those from Ontario, then the Pacific Northwest with the Ohio growers nipping at their heels, and now New Hampshire and New England seem to dominate as a region. I'm smart enough, and experienced enough to know that this is a "moveable feast." Weather and good fortune can make us all look good, so before you decide to move to New Hampshire, maybe all you need to do is get to know some of its best growers.

The top growers in NH include: Charlie Houghton, Bruce Whittier, Jim Beauchemin, Jim Ford, Robert Demers, Matthew Pollack, Matt Mongeon, Chin Ly, Jess Smith, Peter Carter, Geoff Peirce, Jim Kuhn, and Joseph Letourneau.

I've known Charles Houghton since the very beginning of my own career of growing giants. In fact, before I wrote my first book in 1993, he was in an audience I addressed at the New England Pumpkin Growers Association annual winter dinner, where I had asked to present my ideas on writing a book on giant pumpkins. Quiet, unassuming, and always in the company of New Hampshire friends, Charlie Houghton would astound us all in 2002 by growing the largest pumpkin the world has ever seen.

1337.6 pounds is only a number here, but in the flesh, at the actual weigh off in Topsfield, MA where I witnessed the event, that vision belies the number assigned to it. Measuring an incredible 174 inches in circumference (that's 14 1/2 feet for those of you trying to visualize a pumpkin that weighed more than 3 times the weight of the world record up to the year 1979), the 1337.6 was a veritable mountain to behold. Standing, side to side, at over 5 feet wide, Houghton's world record 1337.6 left little doubt in anyone's mind present that something very special had just happened.

Remembering when 1000 pounds was thought to be impossible, yet seeing the digital scale slowly settle at 1337.6 pounds, I pondered the future of this record, and how Charlie Houghton had just elevated the minds, hearts, and expectations of every competitive giant pumpkin grower alive.

