

**Nic Welty The Mad Scientist**

Nic grew his first giant pumpkins in 1994, two plants, one Atlantic Giant, and one Big Max. His largest fruit was a 91 pound Big Max, but every year since, through the year 2000, he has increased his personal best to where it now stands at 947 pounds. In the last two years he has spent less time on competition and more

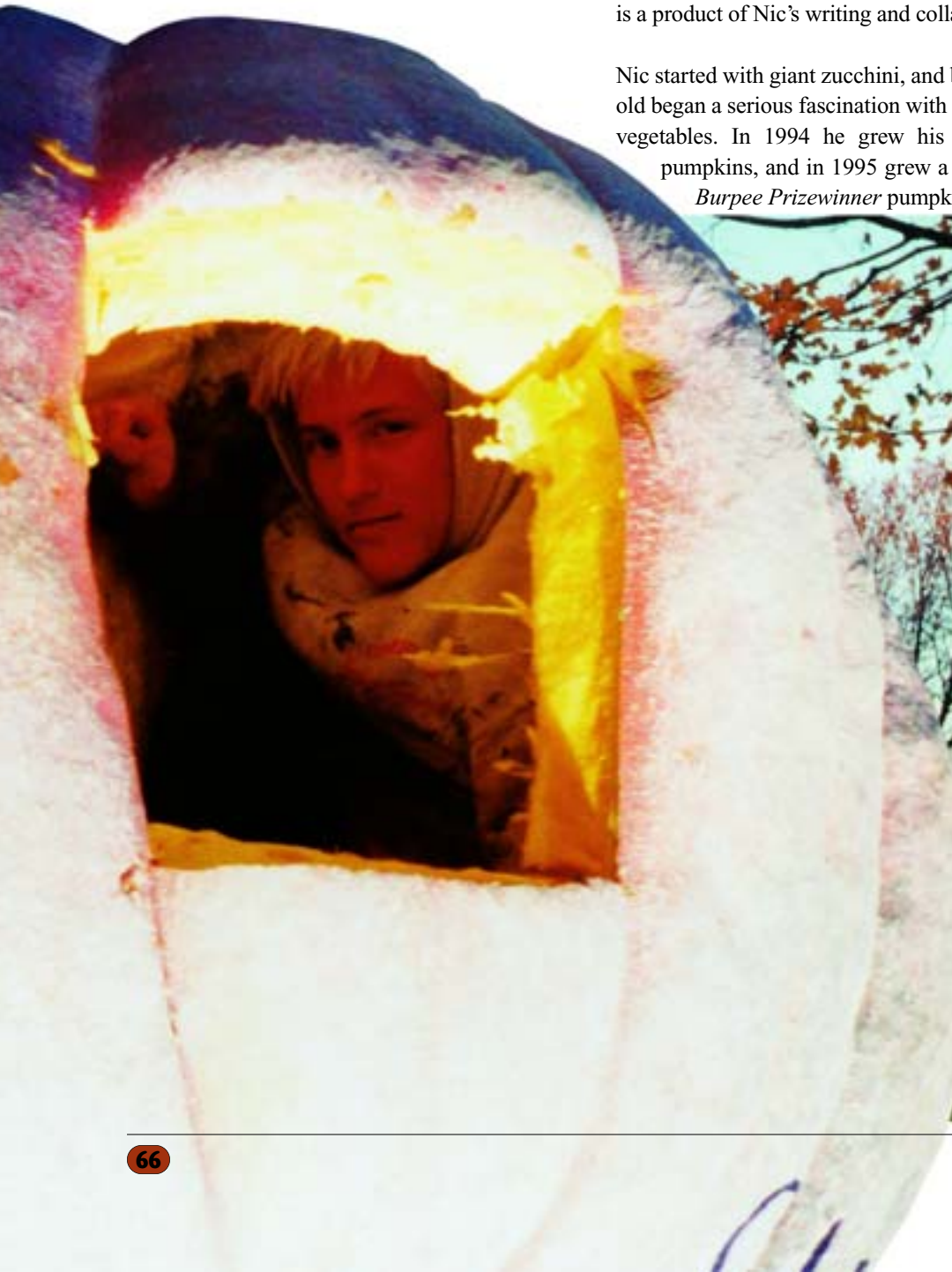
time on study with an emphasis in molecular biology and genetics at Carnegie Mellon University. Over the past three seasons he has grown hundreds of AG plants, conducting experiments to learn more about the nature of the genetics involved in giant pumpkin growing. Most of the information on genetics in this book is a product of Nic's writing and collaboration.

Nic started with giant zucchini, and by 10 years old began a serious fascination with many giant vegetables. In 1994 he grew his first giant pumpkins, and in 1995 grew a 200 pound *Burpee Prizewinner* pumpkin.

In the winter of 1996, Nic found my first book, *How-to-Grow World Class Giant Pumpkins*, in the library, made some contacts, and received seeds from Howard Dill, and myself.

He lost most of his plants that year, but managed a 221.5 pound AG which was weighed at his first weigh off at the Canfield Fair in Ohio. His 221.5 AG was classified a squash and finished last, but a 72 pound Jumpin' Jack pumpkin gained him first place in the field pumpkin category.

In the winter of 1997, he spent much of his time sending out seed requests to top growers, doing independent research, and committing



himself to a plan for full scale operations, with 2500 sq. ft. plants with only one fruit per plant. He lost a 636 pound squash due to inexperience, only to find out that the weigh off champ would be a 636 a few weeks later. This was the year he first began growing true, green, squash, and decided to dedicate efforts to advancing the green monsters, along with experimenting with colchicine and delving into more extensive readings in plant science.

In the winter of 1998, he went, as he says, "totally nuts," getting seeds from just about every top grower, and putting together a winning plan. That season, he learned about splitting fruit. The current Ohio state record was 816 pounds, and he had pumpkins that split early in their growing cycle at: 728, 739, and 809 pounds. Still, he managed to hold a 638 pound fruit for the contest. He also planted his first giant marrow, extended his interests into many other giant fruits and vegetables, and started a small plot of 20 extra plants for genetic observation. In subsequent years, this number would rise steadily, as he carried out a variety of experiments.

In 1999, he spent some time writing instructional articles on techniques, and took a three week vacation to Europe in July after finishing pollination. He produced his first 700+ fruit, and grew a pair of world champion bushel gourds. He also began some genetic tinkering with an extra 50 plants.

In 2000, he grew 21 competition plants, (a mind boggling number), and managed his best year. He started college in the fall, but still his patch produced a 947, 744, 736.5, 670.5, 615, 580, and more. He finished 1-2-3 in the OVGPG squash category. He also grew giant radishes, giant carrots, giant watermelons, giant cantaloupes, giant sunflowers, giant marrows, and giant gourds, along with an additional 300 plants for genetic experimentation. Is it any wonder that his interest in giant vegetable varieties should lead to college study in molecular biology and genetics?

In 2001, he backed off on competitive growing to devote more of his time to schooling and genetic research, but still grew 300 plants for experiments and observations.



In 2002 he grew 500 plants, and focused his attention on gathering knowledge on the genetics of giant pumpkins. He grew an 18.5 pound radish, 33.6 pound cantaloupe, and took first place in the cantaloupe and tomatoe competitions at the Canfield Fair, as well as, second place in the Connecticut Field pumpkin category.

I am indebted to Nic for his collaboration with me on the information contained in this book on genetics and pollination strategies. Without this help, this book would have been diminished, and the information that is so crucial to keeping weights of AG's climbing would have been lost to the general population of growers.

