

# Pump up your pumpkins to giant size

One small seed is all it takes to produce the gigantic pumpkins entered in fierce competitions around the world, including the record set in 2016 with a 2,624.6-pounder that weighed almost as much as a Volkswagen bug.

Maybe you won't achieve quite that size but plant "Dill's Atlantic Giant" and you'll grow a whopping pumpkin, said Jim Myers, a vegetable breeder for Oregon State University.

"I've had these types growing in fields and without doing anything special to them I've gotten 400-pounders," he said. "They certainly need plenty of water and lots of space to grow. People who grow them competitively have their own secret formulas that they don't talk about and use different strategies. It's a very small group that does it competitively and they're very fanatical about it."

Modern monster pumpkin genetics go back to grower Howard Dill, a Nova Scotia farmer who spent 30 years selectively breeding giant pumpkins. He came up with "Dill's Atlantic Giant" — and every world champion since has come



**KYM POKORNY**  
Your Garden

from offspring of those seeds.

Dill reinvigorated giant-pumpkin competitions in 1978 by breaking a 75-year-old record set in 1903 by William Warnock, whose 403-pound oddity was then displayed at the 1904 World's Fair in St. Louis. Dill's champion 438.5-pound pumpkin sounds wimpy next to those grown today, but it was outlandish enough to gain a spot in "Ripley's Believe It or Not." Dill held the world record four years straight and landed in the Guinness World Records book in 1981 with a 493.5-pounder.

To grow a monster pumpkin, see the advice below.

After you've entered your pumpkin in weigh-off competitions, you might be able to sell it to businesses. Casinos or restaurants will sometimes purchase a champion and contract with a professional pumpkin carver to create a short-lived sculpture, Myers said. Or you can roast the seeds. Be



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**If you've got the space and inclination, try growing your own monster pumpkin — for competition or just for fun.**

forewarned, though, the flesh is not very palatable.

"It's something that's interesting to do. There's not a lot of practicality. There might be a little prize money and it's good for notoriety," Myers said.

**To grow a monster pumpkin, it takes a monster amount of land, water and fertilizer. A single pumpkin can cover 1,200-square feet and the big boys need up to 500 gallons a week. If you'd like to try, Myers offers the following advice:**

- Use "Dill's Atlantic Giant" seeds. Competitive growers seek out offspring of the champions, but be aware seeds are expensive — a single seed of a champion has been auctioned for as much as \$1,600. For beginners, find seed online from local mail-order nurseries Territorial Seed Co. and Nichols Garden Seed for significantly cheaper.
- Germinate monster pumpkin seeds at air temperatures of 65 to 75 degrees and soil temperatures of 70 to 90 degrees.
- Grow pumpkins indoors from seed and move the starts to your garden about five to seven weeks later. Plant in late May after the last frost.
- Full sun is important — avoid sites with full or partial shade.
- Avoid soil compaction in the field. Some growers use stepping stones or boards to minimize impact during the season.
- Place plastic around the base of the pumpkin about two weeks before planting to bring the soil temperature to about 60 degrees. A high tunnel or hoop house can also be used, especially during the early part of the season to create a warmer environment for the plant.
- Provide your pumpkin with plenty of room to spread — a single plant may use as much as 1,200-square feet, or roughly a 40-foot diameter circle.
- Remove enough flowers and fruit — pumpkins are actually fruits — to force the plant to put all its energy into producing one behemoth fruit instead of lots of smaller fruits.
- Hand-pollinate pumpkins to increase the number of seeds that develop and the likelihood for bigger fruits. Pull

- off the petals of male flowers, which look like straight stalks, and dab these on the female flowers, which have little round ball-shaped ovaries at their base.
- Give pumpkins 130 days or more to mature. Because of this, they are best suited to Western Oregon.
- Check soil daily. The ground needs to be evenly moist — but not soggy — at all times. Keep water off foliage to discourage disease.
- Apply aged manure in fall or in spring put down compost, up to 5 cubic yards per plant. Then use a fertilizer periodically through the season. Apply lime in fall to bring soil to a more neutral pH if a test determines it is on the acid side. Fertilize every two weeks or so with decomposed manure, compost or fertilizer.
- Maintain a weed-free area around plants.
- Stake down or bury leaf nodes along the vine. These will root and help prevent wind from rolling the vines.
- You can place the growing pumpkin on a large piece of cardboard or piece of wood to repel soil-dwelling insects.
- As the fruit gains size, shade it to prevent scalding and reduce overheating. The skin will also remain more flexible and the fruit will be less likely to split.
- Harvest your pumpkin at the end of the season just before the first frost. It won't color to the bright orange of a jack-o-lantern type, but it will appear pale yellow to orange-ish red when it is ready.
- To qualify as a pumpkin and not a squash, the surface area must be shaded red, pink or yellow, rather than blue, gray or green.
- At harvest time, be careful that the pumpkin does not develop cracks, which will disqualify you in competitions.

## MI TOWN

It's June — the month of graduations and weddings, of warm sunny days and evenings of endless twilight, of trips to the beach and the river and the lakes. After our long and far too wet winter and spring, it's a joy to turn the calendar to a brand-new page and a month that promises good things.

June is not a traditional month for resolutions — that's something we usually do at the beginning of every new year, when we are all optimistic about plans to lose 20 pounds, be kind to animals, save more money and do all kinds of altruistic endeavors. Those resolutions are mostly kicked to the curb by late January or mid-February, and we keep



**PATTY TAYLOR DUTCHER**  
Columnist

plodding through the dark days of winter.

Now that winter is past and the brighter days are here, it's time to make some mid-year resolutions. I've encountered so many people the last several weeks who have spoken of the lack of manners, civil discourse and just plain mean and hateful comments they have witnessed over the last year or so. The horrible murders of two men and the serious injuries to another on the MAX

light-rail line in Portland have brought hatred and racism and intolerance front and center to all of us in Oregon, and the entire USA. There have been nooses hung in the Smithsonian — at the Black History Museum. Graffiti has appeared on houses, cars and wherever the messengers with to spread their hatred. It is beyond understanding that in a country with so many good things going for all of us that people are treating one another so poorly.

I have a friend with a "Don't Tread on Me" tattoo on his arm. His belief is strong enough that he wants to make more than a simple statement, and this is the path he has chosen. He also doesn't say bad things about

others with whom he disagrees, because it would be a rude and thoughtless thing to do. I also have a friend whose Gay Pride bumper sticker is on the back of her little sports car. She doesn't tell her heterosexual friends that her way is the right way and they are wrong. She goes to work every morning and enjoys weekends and holidays as much as the rest of us. The list could go on and on, to include all races and religions and political beliefs as well.

Many years ago, former President George H.W. Bush once asked for a "kinder, gentler nation." No matter what our political and social beliefs may be, whether we are old or young, liberal or conservative, it's time to be civil to each other.

## ANNOUNCEMENT

### Eagle Scout

John Danielson, 17, of Independence, will receive his Eagle Scout at an Eagle Court of Honor on July 8.

John started Cub Scouts when he was 7. Through dedication, hard work and perseverance, he reached his goal of Eagle.

For more than 10 years, John participated in various scouting activities and contributed many hours to the local community. He volunteered gathering canned food for the food bank, planting trees on Arbor Day, guarding the park for the vendors during Fourth of July, and putting flags out during special holidays. Under John's leadership and teamwork spirit, he completed his Eagle project by reconstructing the 200-foot brick pathway at the Historic Gentle House in Monmouth.

John and his parents would like to thank Pack 38 and Troop 38 Scout leaders, John's fellow Boy Scouts, friends, family and teachers who supported him along the way.



## COMMUNITY CALENDAR

Continued from page 10A

### TUESDAY, JUNE 13

- **Free Blood Pressure Checks** — Salem Health West Valley, 525 SE Washington St., Dallas. Second Tuesday of the month. Free. 503-831-5593.
- **James2 Community Kitchen Meal** — 4:30 to 6 p.m., St. Philip Catholic Church, 825 SW Mill St., Dallas. Free; everyone welcome. 503-623-8429.
- **James2 Community Kitchen Meal** — 4:45 to 6:30 p.m., Falls City Methodist Church, 242 North Main St., Falls City. Free. 503-787-3371.
- **Take Off Pounds Sensibly (TOPS) Club** — 6 to 7 p.m. weigh-in, 7 to 8 p.m. meeting, First Christian Church basement, 1079 SE Jefferson St., Dallas. Meetings offer programs and activities aimed at losing weight. Open to anyone. First meeting is free.
- **Overeaters Anonymous** — Noon to 1 p.m., Salem Health West Valley, 525 SE Washington St., Dallas. Support group meets in the quiet room/chapel immediately inside the emergency entrance on Clay Street. Dee Ann White, 971-718-6444.

### WEDNESDAY, JUNE 14

- **Respite care** — 1 to 3 p.m., 182 SW Academy St., Suite 216, Dallas. Free child care for parents who need time to run errands, pay bills, etc. Free. Open for children ages 6 weeks to 5 years. 503-877-8473 to reserve space. Diapers are provided.
- **Willamette Valley Food Assistance Program Food Bank** — 1:30 to 6:30 p.m., 888 Monmouth Cutoff Road, Building E, Dallas. Weekly distribution for eligible community members. 503-831-5634.
- **Free Blood Pressure Check Clinic** — 2 to 3 p.m., Salem Health West Valley (surgery admitting area), 525 SE Washington St., Dallas. 503-623-7323.
- **Monmouth Senior Center Music Jam** — 6:30 p.m., Monmouth Senior Center, 180 S. Warren St., Monmouth. Open to the public; musicians of all types welcome. 503-838-5678.
- **Dallas American Legion Post No. 20** — 7 p.m., Academy Building, Room 108, 182 SW Academy St., Dallas. 503-831-3971.

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*Music from the Redgate Winery & Fieldhouse*

**Friday, June 9**  
**6-9 PM**  
**Ivie Meziere Foss Trio**  
\$5.00 cover

**Saturday, June 10**  
**6-9 PM**  
**G-3**

Must be 21. Food Available.  
**8175 Buena Vista Road**  
Independence • 503-428-7115 • [www.redgatevineyard.com](http://www.redgatevineyard.com)

Tasting fees \$10  
& glass of wine \$5

*Common Sense Tip* FOR PEDESTRIANS

**LOOK LEFT. RIGHT. LEFT.**

Things change fast, so follow these simple steps to make sure the coast is clear before crossing any street. And walk on!

**Walk Safely. The Way to Go.** Transportation Safety — ODOT

Look who's turning  
**90** on June 9th!

**Rosalyn Christopher**

**Happy Birthday!**

Love from her children, grandchildren, great-grandchildren, nieces, nephews, and lots of friends!

**Everyone loves a parade!**

Now accepting applications. Seeking participation in the 4th of July parade.

Application forms are available at Dallas, Monmouth and Independence libraries, City Halls and the Visitor Centers. Also available online from our website, [www.mirotaryclub.org](http://www.mirotaryclub.org)

**Enter early and save!**

Email for more info: [parade@mirotaryclub.org](mailto:parade@mirotaryclub.org)  
Parade sponsored by the Monmouth-Independence Rotary Club