

**Bill Bobier**

Bill started growing giant pumpkins in 1994 with seeds and a WPC newsletter from Ray Waterman, and made it look easy with a first year 667 pounder. “I can’t wait to see what I can do when I know something,” he remarked as he followed the 667 with a very humbling 400 pounder in 1995.

Time to go fishing. Bill isn’t married to growing giant pumpkins, but he is married to doing things in a big way. He has shown no hesitation in taking a year off from pumpkin growing (he’s done it twice since 1994), and when he’s not growing giants, he’s fishing for Tuna – giant Tuna. His best is a 260 pound bluefin – so he qualifies as a world class giant tuna fisherman as well.

Bill is a “Jack of all trades,” but a master of most of them. He balances his life between family (wife, Donna and three daughters), a chimney service and restoration business (yes, he is a chimney sweep, or as he would prefer, a certified chimney professional with a Masters Degree in chemical engineering), and he also finds time for civic service (where he serves as chairman of the Board of Assessors).

His best pumpkin to date is a 2002, 1047 pounder, but he also grew a 1037.5 and a 996 in 2002, and a 1025 in 2000 – he took 2001 off. This record alone would qualify him as a *Heavy Hitter*, but he is famous in competitive giant pumpkin circles for two pumpkins that did not weigh 1000 pounds. His 1999, 723 and 2000, 845 (both unofficial weights) have gone on to produce many world class offspring. The 845 produced the 2002, Houghton world record 1337.6 and the 2001, Weir 1260.4. The 723 produced the 2002, Eaton 1236, the 2001, Eaton, 1153 along with more than 50 other pumpkins over 700 pounds. Any grower with a Bobier 723 or 845 to plant has a chance to challenge the best growers in the world.



Bill with his 2001, 260 lb. Bluefin Tuna

**In Bill's Own Words,**

“My techniques for growing giant pumpkins are not much different from that of most serious growers. I attempt to maximize every step in the development of the plant and pumpkin. When the plants are small, they are protected and kept warm in 12' x 16' greenhouses – with colored water jugs used to retain some of the sun's heat – and an extra bubble packing cover over the plants. They remain in their houses until mid June. I have temperature sensitive window openers to vent the heat during sunny days as well as water misters on an automatic timer.

“When the plants outgrow their houses, I start pruning and burying vines. I prune almost every other side vine and all tertiary vines [third stage growth]. The side vines are grown to 8'-10', terminated, then buried. I trench ahead of the vines then cover them with soil. I have reduced my plant size over the years from 1200 sq. ft. to about 500 sq. ft. I set several fruit on the main vine only, and eventually keep the best based upon shape and position.

“Over the years, my fertilizing regimen has been cut back as well. I add alot of compost and other organics, and have drastically cut-back chemical plantfood. I try to rest some of my patches periodically, and grow green cover crops instead. My patches are as weed free as possible, and I believe it is very important to have an even growth rate for the pumpkins. You can control this with watering rates and fertilizer adjustments.



“I seek to plant the best seed I can obtain, and my “killer cross” [which produced the 2000, 845] has made this possible. Crossing the Lloyd 935 with the Mettler 865 was a lucky guess. When I made this cross I didn't recognize the genetic importance of the lines, but I did know that the 935 Lloyd had a tremendous reputation, as well as the 946 Geerts and the 567 Mombert which are the parents of the 865. This cross has become my claim to fame.”

All I can say about Bill's tips is, “I could not have said it better myself.” Good seeds, small strategically pruned plants, and the use of organic plantfoods in moderation, combine to produce a higher probability of success.



Top: the “killer cross” 2000, 845  
Right: 2002, 1047  
Far right: 2002, 1037.5

