

## Grower Spotlight – *Nursery Rhyme becomes Reality with AEA Products*

“Peter Peter pumpkin eater had a wife and couldn’t keep her. He put her in a pumpkin shell and there he kept her very well.”

Sounds a lot like a nursery rhyme doesn’t it? That is until you meet Matt Brungard. His pumpkins have the potential to do just that, thanks to Advancing Eco Agriculture.

Brungard was a naturopathic physician until he ditched that career and came home to his northeastern Ohio roots. He is now farming his family’s land with his father and raising his five children with his wife, Amy. They are indeed one big, happy family. And if you would have driven by Matt’s place in October, you would’ve seen a sight that is nothing less than surreal – a record size pumpkin loomed eerily above the garden wall. I’m not talking up to your knees; I’m talking up to your shoulders.

Could he keep his family there very well? I will let you be the judge.

Brungard won the Ohio Valley Giant Pumpkin Growers’ 20th annual pumpkin weigh-in held in Canfield, Ohio on October 11th. The massive pumpkin weighed in at a mind bending 1,951 pounds. Brungard is a member of the highly specialized club.

“I’ve always been competitive,” explained Brungard, “I was a competitive cyclist for many years.” The peripatetic life of a competitive cyclist was incompatible with family life, and Brungard had to dial it in and switch it up. Typical of this very creative and competitive man, he came up with the grand idea of growing competitively large pumpkins.

“All the guys in our club from all the surrounding states took a tour of our patches and every one of them said my plants looked great. The weather just cooperated – it rained at the perfect times, the garden never got dry. Well water is a little bit too cold, but it rained and the weather just cooperated perfectly.”

What gave the New Middletown pumpkin grower the competitive edge? Brungard is adamant about crediting AEA with his success. “Jerry Schneider is a friend and mentor in Bessemer, Pennsylvania. He is a master gardener who uses organics. A few years ago he started talking about this Dutch guy out of Middlefield, Ohio. I was blown away just like everyone else is when they hear him.”

Brungard met John Kempf three years ago at a Seminar and was very impressed when he heard him speak. “This is the third year that I’ve been using AEA products and I hit it hard.

“Each year, and this is my third year, I keep using a little bit more of his stuff. I hit it really hard this year with about three or four of his products and I really think that that made a difference. I used Photo Mag, which is a foliar magnesium, and it helps with photosynthesis. The two most important nutrients I was missing in years past were magnesium and calcium.

“I also used Hyper CaP. Jerry Schneider recommended the Hyper CaP because it has the phosphorus. I’m glad I used it. It made a world of difference. There are synergistic nutrients in there; the molasses, and the kelp. So you’re not just throwing one nutrient at it. Those two were the reasons that my pumpkins didn’t split. I had no splits. I had splits the last two years before.”

Brungard also used Sea Shield. “It’s a new product – It’s a vaccination in a bottle. It stimulates the immune system. I was able to use a lot less of my fungicide and my chemicals because I used that organic spray.

“I will definitely use more AEA products next year. Based on my results from this year I’m looking very forward to that,” explained Brungard.

He has also become a proponent of sap analysis, provided by AEA. “Jerry Schneider and I split 14 tests for sap analysis. That made all the difference. I saw the calcium come up; I saw the magnesium come up and I saw the boron come up. Never really foliar sprayed in years past. This year it made all the difference. I could actually see the results of the test. Foliar spraying is key to get the nutrients into the plant.”

“This plant just grew and grew and grew. It was so healthy, the day I picked the pumpkin off, it looked just as healthy as it looked a month before.”

Brungard is definitely pleased with his win, and is looking forward to an even more bountiful harvest next year.



Children from left to right: David, John David, Jameka, Justin, Anthony; Rear: Matt and Amy Brungard.