

# The Great Pumpkin Rises Again In Eichen Garden In Godfrey

by Dan Brannan, Content Director  
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GODFREY - The Great Pumpkin has risen again in Godfrey in the Eichen backyard garden.

David Eichen, an Alton Fire Department battalion chief, loves growing pumpkins and gourds for Halloween time. This year, he grew two monsters, one as of last week not completely developed, but the other he believes may be bigger than the one that attracted national attention in October 2013.

David and his dad, Howard, are shown above with this year's prize from a large garden behind Howard Eichen's Godfrey home. It has been about eight years exactly since David's last big pumpkin story drew raves. This year's prize pumpkin has been transported to one of the Alton Fire Department stations and will likely be on display as Halloween moves closer and will add to the luster of what is called one of the most haunted areas in the United States - the City of Alton.

David's dad isn't sure this one is as big as the previous one that was about 200 pounds, but David, who has lifted it, thinks it could be larger than that one. This year's big pumpkin is a different dimension than the previous one, David said, but he estimates this year's attraction as easily more than 200 pounds.

David's pumpkin-growing odyssey began when he became frustrated with deer eating his vegetable garden. Pumpkins and gourds were simply easier to protect and grow, he said. Today, David uses pumpkin seeds from Howard Dill.

Howard William Dill, an Atlanta pumpkin grower, boasts that when he was a farmer in Windsor, Nova Scotia, where these monsters grow he decided he wanted to celebrate them, David said. The brand is called Dill's Atlantic Giant and described as the "world's largest pumpkin variety." Howard William Dill patented the pumpkin seed variety called Atlantic Giant. He is also known as "The Pumpkin King" and "The father of all pumpkins."

Eichen has been an Alton firefighter for 29 years and he said this pumpkin-growing hobby takes his mind away from some of the stark scenes and situations he has to see as a first responder. He sees growing and distributing pumpkins as "therapy." He never charges for anyone who comes to his trailer in Alton and takes a pumpkin or gourd. Neighbors and people all throughout Alton seem to come out of the woods when his trailer is full of free pumpkins in October near Halloween.

"It is a lot of fun," Eichen said of his giant hobby. "I see a lot of ugly things, and it is something to replace those images with such a variety of positive shapes and sizes."



Now, David can't wait to see the faces of children and families when his second gigantic pumpkin in eight years is unveiled outside the Alton Fire Department for Halloween.

"It brings big smiles out of the kids when we have them to giveaway. It is almost like looking in a candy store window."



