

AGS JIM STORY AWARD QUESTIONNAIRE

PHOTOS ARE AN IMPORTANT PART OF THIS COMPETITION

1. Describe how did you start your seed?

The seed was started indoors about April 1 in a small peat pot filled with seed – starting soil. The pot was kept on a heating pad set on “Low” until the seed germinated. Soil was kept moist. Jim taught me that May 10 is the safe date for transplanting to the outside garden. I follow Jim’s rules!!

2. How did you select the garden site?

The garden is located in the rear yard at my home. There are NO TREES!!! My plants enjoy all day sunshine.

3. Did you have your soil tested for pH level? Did you have it tested or did you do it yourself?

I tested the soil myself by using the Rapitest Soil Test Kit. The test revealed that my soil PH level was acceptable for gourd growth.

4. What technique did you use on your gourd entry? (Circle one)

Manipulated Knotted + Molded Other

Explain how you obtained this shape.

My entry was a combination: knotted and grown in a mold. The gourd bulb was inserted into a small eight-sided drinking glass and grew to the shape of the glass. The gourd was powerful!! Its growth broke the glass!! I usually need to tap the glass with a hammer to break it when harvesting the gourd. The knot was made when the gourd was about eight inches long and on a very warm day.

5. How was your gourd supported? (Circle one) Trellis Arbor Tripod Fence Other

I enclose a photograph of my arbor. Notice that the gourds have friends – Micky and Minnie Mouse are there also!!

6. Describe methods you used to water, fertilize your gourd in your garden? Did you use a special fertilizer?

Watering depends mostly on volume of rain fall. In dry weather, I water every other day. I do not believe that gourds can be overwatered. I add fertilizer when preparing the soil for transplanting. I typically use a well-balanced 10-10-10 fertilizer. I also use manure tea all season long. I obtain fresh cow manure from a farmer friend; use bucket 1/3 full of manure and the rest is water. I use the tea at least twice a week.

7. What pruning, thinning techniques were implemented?

I prune all vines when they reach 10' in length on the top of the arbor. This stimulates growth of laterals and causes gourd production. Occasionally I will prune a lateral to create sub-laterals and hopefully more gourds. I prune all leaves and vine starts between the ground and the arbor as shown in the photo.

8. Did you have Pest or Disease problems with your gourd plant?
How did you handle them?

I am most fortunate in this regard. I know of no pest or disease problems. I do spray the vines and the gourds once a week with Sevin. I believe this protects the plant and the gourds.

9. Describe how you manipulated your gourd? What type of ties? If you used a mold was it purchased or handmade? Was the mold made of plaster, plastic, wood, etc? Do you have a picture of the mold itself?

The gourd was knotted when it was about six inches long and on a very hot day – over 80 degrees. Thankfully, it didn't break!! I inserted the bulb into the glass mold when it would just make a snug fit. A picture of the glass is enclosed herewith.

10. Describe the method you used to cure, dry and clean your gourd?

I did not harvest the gourd until frost and cold weather had killed the vines. I green cleaned the gourd and its stem upon harvesting. My friend Jim always stressed to me the importance of green cleaning.

After green cleaning, the gourd was maintained in my garage until all interim moisture was gone.

I use a boy-scout knife to green clean the bulk of the gourd. I use a length of rough wire to clean around the knot. This is a chore!!!

11. Additional comments you would like to make to explain your entry.

I have previously advised the American Gourd Society of the circumstances surrounding my friendship with Jim and Jane Story. If needed, this can be found in my entry in the 2010 competition. I also enclose:

- a. Photo of me, the gourd and ribbons presented.
- b. Glass used to mold the gourd (same as one actually used)
- c. Photo of soil-test kit used. (SORRY, I HAVE MISPLACED IT.)
- d. The gourd was grown in 2013 and exhibited at the IGS State show in 2014.

I appreciate the taking of your time to serve as judges.

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PHOTOS ARE AN IMPORTANT PART OF THIS COMPETITION

1. Describe how did you start your seed?

First let me tell you how we *acquired* the seed! It began with watching the terrific Jim Story video that Terry Noxel gave me; the one put out by the Indiana Chapter. After watching that I had to call Glenn Burkhalter, and he put me in touch with Norm Brickner. I decided I needed to find really good Extra Long-Handled Dipper seeds! So, I got seeds from 3 different sources. Unfortunately, I can't tell you which source this seed came from. But this year (2014) we grew an Extra Long-Handled Dipper that is 6'3"!! So, long is still quite long!

We started our seeds indoors, in 4-inch peat pots, in late April. We took the little seedlings out daily, to get them used to the bracing New York State fresh air. We planted them out in early June, a few days after a very late frost. We set them under little bonnets made of row cover, for a little extra protection. By late June they were on their way up the trellis!

2. How did you select the garden site?

Our site for this plant was along a trellis over a path between our house and the chicken coop. It's a path frequented by my neighbors, who enjoyed watching the gourds progress. The main problem with this site was the lack of a fence.

3. Did you have your soil tested for pH level? Did you have it tested or did you do it yourself?

We did not test the soil. A few years prior, we had the town drop off a large truckload of leaves at that spot, and the soil was nice and loamy.

4. What technique did you use on your gourd entry? (Circle one) Manipulated Knotted Molded Other Explain how you obtained this shape.

This is a knotted gourd, grown the first year we that we tried putting knots in gourds. When it was a little teeny pepo, still wet behind the ears, and a bit limp (in the heat of the day), I nudged it. Gently. Then, a short while later, I nudged it again. And so on.

5. How was your gourd supported? (Circle one) Trellis Arbor Tripod Fence Other

Supported on a trellis, but not high. What distinguishes this gourd is the looseness of the knot. Tight knots are valued by some, we know, but we prefer a relaxed, graceful knot. This gourd actually dropped a bit during a wind storm, but the vine didn't break. So the proximity of the gourd to the ground was very helpful in this circumstance.

6. Describe methods you used to water, fertilize your gourd in your garden? Did you use a special fertilizer?

We planted in a large hill of composted manure (2 wheel-barrow loads!). The manure we get is from a farmer who uses the methane from his manure pile for some of his energy needs. What's left after his process is perfect for the gourds! We didn't fertilize after the gourd was in the ground, but watered lots.

7. What pruning, thinning techniques were implemented?

The vine was pinched when it reached 10 feet, but otherwise the plant was allowed free range of the trellis.

8. Did you have Pest or Disease problems with your gourd plant? How did you handle them?

Because of the lack of a fence, the deer and rabbits also had free range, so Otto spent a lot of time spraying nasty-smelling stuff to keep them away. We do have cucumber beetles every year, and we are committed to organic methods of pest control. This year we came up with a pretty good way to manage the cucumber beetles... I'll write more about that next year, if we enter the contest again!

9. Describe how you manipulated your gourd? What type of ties? If you used a mold was it purchased or handmade? Was the mold made of plaster, plastic, wood, etc? Do you have a picture of the mold itself?

Gentle nudging.

10. Describe the method you used to cure, dry and clean your gourd?

We used the "hands-off" gourd-curing technique: our gourd sat outside all winter to cure. We opted not to green-clean this gourd, because we had had unfortunate results with that technique in the past. We soaked the gourd for a couple of hours at the nifty gourd-cleaning station (livestock trough on a stand) that Otto built, and cleaned it with a copper pot-scrubber.

11. Additional comments you would like to make to explain your entry.

We are very glad to be submitting this gourd from 2013 for entry in the Jim Story contest. We have fun talking with visitors to Gourlandia who ask about it, and we always admit, after a while, that we were the only entrants in the New York State contest this year. Hopefully we'll have more gourd-growers as our chapter takes root!

Judges ID Code _____
(JSA Committee Use Only)

QUESTIONNAIRE

1 - Please describe the site your gourds were grown on.

I have a large garden site with trellises, arbors, tall fencing and ground space for growing my gourds. I have several gourd growing sites.

2 - How do you prepare the soil? Do you test for nutrients and/or pH? What amendments did you add this year?

This area was pasture ground for years. All I did was work the ground in some places, lay plastic down in other and just plant in still others.

3 - Did you start your seed indoors or plant directly in the soil? When did you start your seeds?

I do start seeds inside, in petri dishes using an egg incubator. Start in early May, to plant outside first of June, in 80'temps.

4 - Describe the methods and frequency used to water and fertilize your Plants.

I water when plants are young and getting started. Later on, only in really dry, hot weather. I fertilize the plants hole at planting time only. I fertilize plantong hole

5 - What pruning or thinning techniques (if any) did you use?

I plant 2 plants per hole for arbors/trellises/fences, so no thinning. I do train vines to climb up the supports. Pruning main vines as needed.

6 - Which of these methods was employed to support your gourds?

Trellis Arbor Tripod Fence

Other (explain).

7 - Which manipulation technique(s) did you employ to manipulate your gourd?

Hand trained Rope Cage Mold Other (explain).

a - If you used a mold, cage or other mechanical device, was it purchased or homemade? If homemade, explain how you made it.

Purchased.

Homemade (explain below how you made it).

QUESTIONNAIRE (continued)

8 - Describe in detail how you manipulated your gourd. Attach photos, diagrams or other available information to show how you did it.

I bought Jim Story tape "From Vine To Design" from IGS, watched it several times and was ready to play with gourds. I followed Jim's instructions to tie knots, corkscrews, rope training and had much fun and success.

9 - Describe the method used to cure, dry and clean your gourd.

I pile gourds outside, 2 or 3 layers deep, on pallets to dry all winter. In spring I soak gourds in water then scrape off skin, let dry and store, in bags, in my barn till needed.

10 - Use this space to provide any additional comments that might be helpful in explaining your entry.

Green cleaned gourds are kept inside and watched/wiped for mold till dry. The best ones stay inside, others are stored in the barn till needed.

11. Did you green clean your gourd (remove the outer skin before the gourd turned brown) Yes No ? If yes, how did you determine the proper time to green clean?

In mid/late November I think about green cleaning, before mold spots appear. Scrape on bottom of gourd, if it weeps a lot, I stop, then try again in a few days and so on. Also it's a lot of luck for me.

NOTE: Make additional comments here or on attach on separate page if needed.

The Jim Story tape "From Vine To Design" from the Indiana Gourd Society is the best way to learn to manipulate gourds. I also built 3- 25' long fences to Jim's instructions on the tape. I feel that anyone can grow gourds, but it takes good instructions and practice to learn to manipulate them.

I only knew Jim in his later years, but he was still an inspiration to us all. I am thankful that Jane Story is still with us and I enjoy her many "Story" stories.

We realize that green cleaning is not a widely established practice in some areas of our country, especially in the hot, dry growing conditions of the West. For more information on green cleaning, go to the AGS website and click on the Jim Story Award page. Under CONTENTS, click on Tutorials. There, you will find two files pertaining to green cleaning.

Judges ID Code. _____ (JSA Committee Use Only)

QUESTIONNAIRE

1- Please describe the site your gourds were grown on.

My gourds are grown on an arbor, in the south east corner of our yard, at an elevation of about 2600 feet. The area gets 6 - 8 hours of pretty consistent sunlight.

2 - How do you prepare the soil? Do you test for nutrients and/or pH? What amendments did you add this year?

2018 was the third growing season where I used this particular spot and arbor. It is an area that contains very poor soil, so I have imported peat moss, garden soil, vermiculite, etc. I put some leaves and a few grass clippings on the area where I plant the gourds along the arbor to winter over. This spring, I worked the soil, and when I planted the gourd plants, I used a fertilizer called Thrive by Zamzows. I also used KelPlex, by Down to Earth.

3 - Did you start your seed indoors or plant directly in the soil? When did you start your seeds?

My seeds are started indoors and grown in a greenhouse until they ready to be hardened of. I got my plants in the ground two weeks late this year, on June 1.

4 - Describe the methods and frequency used to water and fertilize your Plants.

When I plant my seedlings, I dig a trench first and then I dig the plant holes, the trench is to facilitate keeping the water near the plants as they send out roots. I lay a soaker hose down in the trench and water every other day until it heats up, then every day, and sometimes twice a day. I fertilize about once every two weeks.

5 - What pruning or thinning techniques (if any) did you use?

I trim the leaves away from the base of the plants after they are up and over the arbor. I then only trim as needed to insure the good growth of my plants and the gourds on them.

6 - Which of these methods was employed to support your gourds?

____ Trellis Arbor ____ Tripod ____ Fence

7 - Which manipulation technique(s) did you employ to manipulate your gourd?

Hand trained ____ Rope ____ Cage ____ Mold Other
(explain).

I decided to try to twine a long-handled dipper through the tines of a deer antler. I thought weaving a gourd around and through an antler's tines would be unusual, natural, and beautiful in its own right.

_____ I actually did two this year, one came on quite a bit earlier; this one came on very late for us, in early August.

8 - Describe in detail how you manipulated your gourd. Attach photos, diagrams or other available information to show how you did it.

I grew and manipulated this extra-long handled dipper gourd this year. As I've mentioned before, this gourd was a late starter, so, on August 4, I suspended a deer antler from the top of the arbor near it (See picture). I draped it over the antler. Then, on succeeding

days (twice a day), I encouraged it to wrap over the antler. I used lengths of cotton gauze and cotton sheets (see picture) as well as weights placed in plastic bags. Then I wrapped the bulb at the end of the gourd and begin persuading it (with the weights tied to the other end of the sheeting) to wrap around the antler one more time, and then to come back along the antler to complete the design. As the bulb on the end of the gourd grew larger, in fact, as the gourd grew larger, this became more and more difficult. I worked with this gourd for over three weeks making small movements twice a day.

9 - Describe the method used to cure, dry and clean your gourd.

Because this gourd started growing in August, I was very concerned as October approached and days became shorter and cooler. I worried that it would not mature, so I waited until two weeks before our festival, and on October 14, I cut it off the arbor and green cleaned it. Its stem was still green and I knew I was taking a huge risk of it splitting or collapsing, but I knew we award more points in our local competition for green cleaning, so I took the risk.

I wrapped it in a damp tea towel the first night after I cleaned it, and turned it every day to try to help the drying process along. It dried beautifully.

10- Use this space to provide any additional comments that might be helpful in explaining your entry.

Finding the right antler to use in this experimental process was a challenge as well. I needed one that would cradle the gourd and create the effect I wanted.

11. Did you green clean your gourd (remove the outer skin before the gourd turned brown) Yes X No ___? If yes, how did you determine the proper time to green clean?

See the answer to #9.

NOTE: Make additional comments here or on attach on separate page if needed.

This was an unusual year; my dippers produced very few female blossoms (which I hand-pollinated) at first, so, very few gourds. This gourd came on late, in early August, as did over half of the gourds on my arbor. At that point, it seemed like I had ten female blossoms for every male blossom. An angel was sitting on my shoulder during this entire process because manipulating all of these "late bloomers" was more difficult, nerve-racking, and therefore, more rewarding than those which had come on a month earlier.