

Orion gardener reaps big bounty

BY MARTY FIGLEY
Special Writer

Last year Fred Carter of Orion grew a pumpkin that weighed 473 pounds! It won the weigh-off in Armada last October.

This year he is nurturing three more pumpkins that may rival that winner. I asked Carter how he does it and he said, "I planted the seeds indoors the first of May, then set the plants in the garden the end of May. The vines grow from two seeds and I pinch the blossoms so that only one pumpkin will grow. This year I kept cutting the vines back because they were covering everything . . . Finally I've let them grow in the yard."

The pumpkins are shaded with a cloth covering because a lot of heat is generated by the sun, so the shading is necessary. Last year his winner was displayed at Canterbury Village.

Mary Klemic, my editor, and I were measuring sunflowers for our contest and when we drove up to Carter's home we were both amazed at the wonderful flower gardens. We weren't anticipating such a successful vegetable garden, too.

Back to the flowers. Visible from the road is a large array of brightly colored plants that just begs to be admired. The area is filled with five varieties of sun-

flowers, many yellow and orange marigolds, zinnias, red salvia, very tall cannas, cleomes and more. They are placed against a low fence on which grapevines twine and are backed by tall castor beans.

Carter explained that the castor beans have two seeds inside each bright cherry red (when ripe) prickly ball that is the size of a walnut. These plants need a lot of hot weather to bloom and this year was ideal. Oil from the seeds is the nasty-tasting oil given to children and which is now used to repel animals. The dark red veining on the large leaves is striking.

"I had the seed and they look pretty."

Along the back fence bachelor buttons, red salvia, cleome (volunteers from last year), white and pink cosmos, pink zinnias — "Rosy Future" and "Hybrid Goddess" — and red ones — "Firecracker" — grow. Also bright marigolds, "Orange Lady" and "Primrose

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Great gardener: Fred Carter of Orion stands by the hibiscus that is just one of the many flowers he has raised in his magnificent garden.



MARTY FIGLEY

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