

Watermelon

(*Citrullus lanatus*)

Recommended Varieties

Disease Resistance

Bush Vine

Garden Baby (small round fruit)	
Bush Chaleston Grey (small, oblong fruit)	F
Bush Jubilee (small, oblong fruit)	AN, F
Bush Sugar Baby (small, round fruit)	

Large Vine

Calsweet (large, oblong fruit)	F
Crimson Sweet (large, round fruit)	AN, F
Sugar Baby (small, round fruit)	
Sweet Baby (small, round fruit)	F
Charleston Grey (large, oblong fruit)	AN, F
Prince Charles (large, oblong fruit)	F

Seedless

Triple Sweet Hybrid
Tri X-313 Hybrid

Yellow-Fleshed Fruit

Yellow Baby (small, round fruit)	AAS
Yellow Doll (small, round fruit; semi-compact vines)	

You need a fairly large garden to grow watermelons successfully. The general methods of planting and handling are the same as those given for growing cantaloupes, their cucurbit cousins. The first fruits may be ready for harvest about 90 days after the seeds are planted. In sections where winter rainfall is over 12 inches and the soil stores 9 inches of water, watermelons grow reasonably well without irrigation, although irrigation increases yields. If you practice dry farming, plant seed as early as possible in the spring and thin the plants to one plant per hill.

To test melons for ripeness, rap the side of the fruit with your knuckles. A light or metallic sound means that the fruit is still green; a dull sound means it is ripe. This is most reliable in the early morning. During the heat of the day or after melons have been picked for some time, they all sound ripe. Fruits have a "ground spot" where they rest on the ground; this spot turns slightly yellow as the fruit matures. Watermelons tend to become rough as they mature. The tendrils closest to the fruit darken and dry up as the fruit ripens. Do not pull melons off the vine; use a sharp knife for cutting.

Watermelon is a relative of cucumber, squash, pumpkin, and cantaloupe. See **Fruit Set Problems In Squash, Melons and Cucumbers In Home Gardens.**

Nutritional Value

Serving size:	1 cup cubes	<u>Primary Nutrients</u>	<u>%RDA(m)</u>	<u>%RDA(f)</u>
Calories	50	Vitamin C	15 mg	25
Fat	0.7 g	Vitamin B6	.23 mg	12
Calories from fat	12.6%	Thaimine	.13 mg	9
Cholesterol	0	Vitamin A	58 RE	6
Sodium	3 mg	Magnesium	17 mg	5
Protein	1.0 g			
Carbohydrate	11.5 g			
Dietary fiber	0.6 g	Potassium	186 mg	<u>% Min. Requirement</u> 9

Problem Diagnosis for Watermelon

What the Problem Looks Like	Probable Cause	Comments
Deformed, curled leaves. Small, soft-bodied insects on undersides of leaves. Sticky honeydew or black, sooty mold may be present.	Aphids	Use insecticidal soap.
Fine stippling on leaves. Yellow or brown leaves. Leaf undersides are silver-gray with fine webbing and yellow, orange, or red dots.	Spider mites	Use oil or soap spray.
Leaves turn yellow. Honeydew or sooty mold present. Clouds of tiny white insects fly up when plant is disturbed.	Whiteflies	Remove infested plants as quickly as possible. Remove lower, infested leaves of plants not totally infested.
Coarse, white stippling on upper surface of leaves. Leaves may turn brown.	Leafhoppers	
Blotches or tunnels on leaves	Leafminers	

Problem Diagnosis for Watermelon (continued)

What the Problem Looks Like	Probable Cause	Comments
Angular necrotic areas on leaves.	Angular leafspot caused by bacterium that spreads in water)	Avoid wetting foliage with irrigation water.
Swelling, beads on roots. Wilted plants. Poor yields.	Nematodes	Rotate crops. Use soil solarization techniques.
Holes chewed in leaves. Scarring of runners, young fruit, and crown. Wilting. Beetles are visible.	Cucumber beetles (Beetles are yellow-green with black stripes or spots.)	Use pyrethrins.
Leaves have small specks that turn yellow, then brown. Vines wilt from point of attack to end of vine.	Squash bug	Trap adults beneath boards in spring. Turn over boards in a.m. and kill bugs. Pick off adults, young, egg masses.
White, powdery spots on leaves and stems. Spots may enlarge and completely cover leaf. Defoliation may occur. Yields reduced.	Powdery mildew (Spores of powdery mildew fungus are spread by wind and air currents.)	Disease is less severe in hot, dry weather. Use resistant varieties. Dusting with sulfur can be effective. Remove old plant debris.
Yellow spots on upper leaf surfaces. Grayish, fuzzy growth on undersides of spots.	Downy mildew (caused by fungus disease)	Use resistant varieties. Remove old plant debris.
Watersoaked, sunken, brown or black spot at blossom end of watermelon fruit	Blossom end rot Uneven soil moisture	Water during dry periods; mulch; remove affected fruit.
Excessive vegetative growth	Planting too close together	Increase plant spacing.
Water-soaked, sunken, brown or black spot on fruit not restricted to blossom end	Belly rot	Rotate crops. Improve drainage. Stake or cage to keep fruit off ground.

Problem Diagnosis for Watermelon (continued)

What the Problem Looks Like	Probable Cause	Comments
Stunted plants, small leaves with irregularly shaped light and dark spots (mottled). Yields reduced	Mosaic virus (transmitted by aphids)	Remove infected plants as soon as detected. Control aphids. Control weeds. Aluminum foil is effective as soil mulch to reduce infection. Deformed fruit is edible.
Poor fruit set	Insufficient pollination Lack of bee pollinators	Hand-pollinate using artist's paintbrush if you have too few bee pollinators. Bee activity may be low due to cool weather or insecticides.
Misshapen or bitter fruit	Inadequate pollination Dry soil or high temperatures Poor soil fertility	See comments above. Supply water. Get soil tested.
Poor flavor Lack of sweetness	Poor soil fertility Low potassium, magnesium or boron.	Get soil tested and adjust fertilizer.
Plants wilt and die, beginning with older crown leaves. Light brown streaks occur inside lower stem, runners and root. Visible when split lengthwise.	Verticillium wilt (caused by <i>Verticillium</i> fungus)	Rotate. Avoid soil previously planted in potatoes, peppers, eggplant, tomatoes, and cucurbits.
Plants will suddenly. Roots rot.	Sudden wilt (Caused by <i>Pythium fungus</i>)	Avoid water stress after fruit set. Avoid wetting soil to the crown. Improve drainage. Plant on raised beds.

Note: Watermelon (*Citrullus lanatus*) is a relative of melons (*Cucumis melo*) -- cantaloupe, honeydew, crenshaw -- , winter and summer squash (*Cucurbita pepo* var. *melo*), pumpkin (*Cucurbita pepo* var. *pepo*), and cucumbers (*Cucumis sativus*). Collectively, known as the cucurbits, they suffer from similar pests and diseases, evident from the problem diagnosis table.