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# virginia home food production



## MELONS DEPARTMENT OF HORTICULTURE

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Reprinted January 1981

MH 410

BLACKSBURG, VIRGINIA

### ENVIRONMENTAL PREFERENCES

LIGHT: sunny

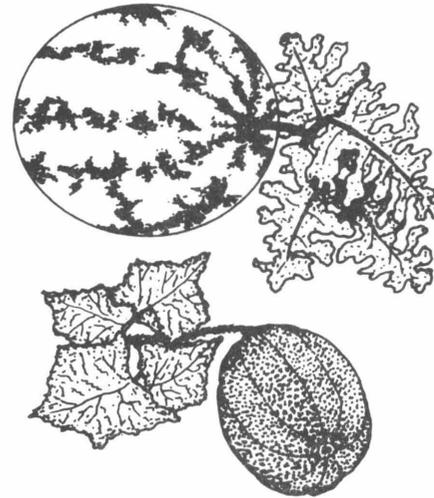
SOIL: well-drained, moderate organic matter, sandy

FERTILITY: medium

pH: 6.0 - 7.5

TEMPERATURES: hot (70-85°F)

MOISTURE: average



### CULTURE

PLANTING: seed after all danger of frost is past and when soil warms, or begin transplants in "peat pots" three to four weeks before this time.

SPACING: muskmelons hills 24-36" x 60-90"; watermelons hills 6-8' x 7-10'

HARDINESS: very tender annual

FERTILIZER NEEDS: heavy feeder, use starter solution for transplants, sidedressing with nitrogen may lower yield or quality or both.

CULTURAL PRACTICES:

Muskmelons and watermelons are

warm season crops requiring a long growing season of 80 to 100 days from seed to fruit. Most present varieties are not well suited to small gardens because of the required space. Newer bush varieties should be used in small gardens. Muskmelons and watermelons are well suited for growing on black plastic mulch.

Melons can be produced from transplants or planted directly. Muskmelon rows should be five feet apart with hills spaced every 2-3 ft. with two to three plants per hill. Watermelon rows should be 6-10 ft. apart with hills spaced at 6-8 ft. intervals. The seed should be placed one-half to one inch deep after danger of frost is past and soil has warmed.

Begin transplants in peat pots three

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Issued in furtherance of Cooperative Extension work, Acts of May 8 and June 30, 1914, and September 30, 1977, in cooperation with the U.S. Department of Agriculture. W. R. Van Dresser, Dean, Extension Division, Cooperative Extension Service, Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University, Blacksburg, Virginia 24061; M. C. Harding, Sr., Administrator, 1890 Extension Program, Virginia State University, Petersburg, Virginia 23803.

to four weeks before used out-of-doors. Melons grown from transplants can be harvested as much as two weeks earlier than those grown directly from seed, because seed planting must wait until after the danger of frost is past.

Male and female flowers are separated on the same plant. Bees must carry pollen from flower to flower to insure good fruit. Use insecticides late in the evening to prevent killing bees.

Melons should be harvested when the fruit will pull away from the vine easily ("full slip"). Plants can be trained to grow in rows for easier harvesting. Growing on a trellis allows for closer spacing (three feet between rows).

**COMMON PROBLEMS**

DISEASES: bacterial wilt (spread by cucumber beetles), fusarium wilt, leaf spot, powdery and downy mildews, alternaria blight.

INSECTS: cucumber beetles, squash vine borer, pickleworms

CULTURAL: poor flavor and lack of sweetness due to poor fertility (low potassium), cool temperatures, wet weather, poorly adapted variety, loss of leaves from disease, or picking unripe melons, poor pollination (cool, wet weather; lack of bee pollinators; planting too close, resulting in excessive vegetative growth).

**NUTRITIONAL VALUE**

Muskmelon, 5 in. diam., orange flesh  
 % U.S. RDA: ½ melon

Grams	Calories	Vitamin A	Vitamin C
477	80	180	150

Watermelon, diced - 1 cup

% U.S. RDA:			
Grams	Calories	Vitamin A	Vitamin C
160	40	20	20

**HARVESTING AND STORAGE**

DAYS TO MATURITY: 70 - 120

HARVEST: Muskmelons are harvested at "Full-slip" when the stem separates easily at the point of attachment. Honeydew and Crenshaw melons are cut off after they turn completely yellow. For watermelons, become familiar with the variety being grown to determine the best stage for harvesting. The best indicator is a yellowish undercolor where the melon touches the ground and a full appearance compared to a slick appearance prior to maturity. A dead tendril or curl near the point where the fruit is attached to the vine is used by some as an indication that the fruit is ready for harvest. "Thump" the fruit for the dull sound of ripe fruit rather than a metallic sound.

APPROXIMATE YIELDS: (per 10 foot row) 8 - 40 lbs.

AMOUNT TO RAISE PER PERSON: 10 - 15 lbs.

STORAGE: medium-cool (40-50°F), moist (80-85% RH) conditions; 2-3 weeks.

PRESERVATION: cool, moist storage, may freeze muskmelons.

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