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I. NOTES OF INTEREST

A. Vegetable Crops Calendar.


II. COMMERCIAL VEGETABLES


Standard watermelons weigh from 18 to 35 lbs and represent most of the commercial crop grown in Florida. Icebox watermelons weigh 6 to 12 lbs each and are grown on a small acreage. Seedless watermelons, weighing 12 to 18 lbs, also are grown in Florida on a limited scale. Florida produced 8.3 million cwt of watermelons of all types from 37,000 harvested acres in 1992-93 which provided an average yield of 225 cwt/acre. The average price was $8.00/cwt providing a crop value exceeding $66 million which accounted for 3.9% of the gross returns to the state's vegetable growers.

Until recently, the Florida crop was about equally divided among open pollinated and hybrid varieties of Crimson Sweet, Charleston Gray, and Jubilee types. A noticeable decline in Charleston Gray and Jubilee production has been replaced largely by increases in production of Allsweet and blocky Crimson Sweet types.

The purpose of this trial was to evaluate some of the recently introduced commercial and experimental hybrids of the Crimson Sweet and Allsweet types.

The Eau Gallie fine sand was prepared in early February by incorporation of 0-1.2-0 lb N-P_2O_5-K_2O per 100 linear bed feet (lbf). Beds were formed and fumigated with methyl bromide/chloropicrin, 67:33 at 2.3 lb/100 lb. Banded fertilizer was applied in shallow grooves on the bed shoulders at 2.7-0-3.8 lb N-P_2O_5-K_2O/100 lbf after the beds were pressed and before application of the black polyethylene mulch. The total fertilizer applied was equivalent to 130-60-182 lb N-P_2O_5-K_2O/acre. The final beds were 32 in. wide and 8 in. high and were spaced on 9 ft centers, with four beds between seepage irrigation/drainage ditches which were on 41 ft centers. The standard watermelons were planted in rows adjacent to the ditches and also served as pollenizers for seedless watermelons that were being evaluated in the two center beds of each land.

The watermelons were direct-seeded on 15 February in holes punched in the polyethylene mulch at 3 ft in-row spacing. Harvests were made on 16 May, 26 May and 9 June. Marketable fruit (U.S. No. 1 or better) according to U.S. Standards for Grades were separated from culls and counted and weighed individually.

Early yields (first harvest) varied from 90 cwt/acre for 'Regency' to 336 cwt/acre for 'Sangria'. Average fruit weight ranged from 17.6 lb for XPH 6190 to 29.1 lb for 'Summer Flavor 520'. Soluble solids varied from 11.8% for 'Starbrite' to 14.1% for 'Sultan'. Soluble solids for early harvested fruit of all entries exceeded the 10% specified for optional use to designate very good internal quality in the U.S. Standards for Grades of Watermelons. The proportion of sampled fruit with hollowheart varied from 0 for ASM 6564, 'Starbrite', 'Fiesta', and 'Sangria' to 100% for 'Royal Star'. The severity (average width of fruit cracks) of hollowheart ranged from 0 to 3.3 in. for the aforementioned entries.

Total yields in the replicated trial ranged from 390 cwt/acre for 'Regency' to 551 cwt/acre for ASM 6564 but there were no statistical differences...
among the entries. Average fruit weight varied from 17.6 lb for XPH 6190 to 25.2 lb for 'Starbrite'. Soluble solids of fruit over the season were uniformly high ranging from 11.2% for RXW 105 to 13.0% for 'Sultan'. The incidence and severity of hollowheart was less for the total harvest than for the early harvest. Nonetheless, 51% of the 'Royal Star' fruit that were sampled had hollowheart and the average crack width was 1.5 in.

Watermelon yields were similar to those obtained at this location in 1991 and 1992 but not as high as those obtained in 1993. Based on results of this and previous trials, the following Allsweet type and blocky Crimson Sweet type varieties are expected to perform well in Florida: 'Fiesta', 'Royal Sweet', 'Sangria' and 'Starbrite'.

(Maynard, Vegetarian 95-02)

III. VEGETABLE GARDENING

A. Minigardening

One gardening variation that seems to have caught on with even the most novice gardener is referred to as "minigardening". It involves growing vegetables in some sort of container, utilizing either garden soil or a prepared mixture called a soil substitute. It can also mean gardening on a small plot.

Minigardening is practical for those who do not have sufficient yard space for an outdoor garden. Even persons living in apartments and condominiums can grow at least a few vegetables by planting a minigarden. On problem soils, such as the hard, calcareous flatwoods of Dade County and the porous, excessively drained soils found in a number of counties, the entire outdoor garden might be constructed above ground. Areas suitable are along fences and in fence corners, in and around flower beds, on patios, porches, and balconies, and even on rooftops. Such small-scale container culture can be both practical and ornamental if properly and imaginatively done.

A wide assortment of containers might be used, ranging from hanging baskets and flower pots to tubs, bean hampers, and refuse cans. Most any container is suitable as long as it is sufficiently durable and large enough to hold the fully-grown plant or plants. In this respect, gardeners are limited only by their imagination. An old bathtub might yield the prize tomatoes of the neighborhood, while an old plastic beach ball cut in half could become an excellent herb container.

A "grow-box" is a raised bed enclosed on all four sides by a wooden frame. A typical size is 4'x8' and 5'x10'. The wooden frame should be constructed of 2x6 inch (or wider) rot-resistant lumber. Pressure treated and creosoted timbers may be used with no ill effects from the wood preservative. Cedar wood is an excellent choice. An abandoned cypress-wood skiff was utilized as a grow-box by one gardener that I knew. Even fiberglass models would make excellent grow-boxes.

Obviously, the larger kinds of vegetables require more space and larger containers. For example, miniature tomatoes such as 'Micro-Tom', 'Tiny Tim', 'Fleragold Basket', 'Florida Basket', 'Florida Petite', and 'Basket King', herbs and strawberries, can be grown in hanging baskets, while 'Better Boy' and 'Patio' need 5 gallon buckets.

(Stephens, Vegetarian 95-02)
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