

CAROLINA CROSS: This is the largest watermelon variety. All watermelon world records over the past thirty-five years have been set using this variety. This variety just grows and grows. It continues to grow even after ripening. There are noticeable variations within the variety such as length, width, seed color, rind contour, and growth rate. All of the Carolina Cross variations sold by Giant Watermelons are capable of growing watermelons in excess of two hundred pounds each. Buyers can choose seeds from individual watermelons listed by weight or they can choose from pooled seeds of young seed melons. The advantage of using the young random seeds is better germination. A first time grower of this variety would be wise to read the growing instructions before planting.

These Carolina Cross seed watermelons have been planted on the Bright farm for 2011:

157 Bright (Open pollinated 148 Bowers) 2004

157 Bright Offspring 2006, best plant from a row of 20 plants

268 Bright WR 2005 X 157 Bright 2004, 2006 cross

211 Westfall (239 Leonard X 224 Westfall) 2009, 224 Westfall is from 249 Bright

110 Bright (Open pollinated 242 Carson 1986), 110 is a 262 Carson WR sibling 2008

285 Edwards dmg (157 Bright X 168 Johnson) 2008

285 Edwards dmg X 81 Bowers (255 Conrad WR X 260 Bright WR) 2009

221 Edwards (267 Pleasant X 267 Edwards) 2010

267 Edwards (f 255 Mitchell X m 262 Bright x 248 Bright) 2008

195 Bright (Open pollinated 285 Edwards dmg) 2009

291 Kent WR (239 Leonard X 157 Bright) 2010,

260 Kent (255 Mitchell X 239 Leonard) 2010

239 Leonard (197 Leonard X 211 Leonard) 2008

255 Mitchell (168 Johnson X 157 Bright) 2007.

145 Bowers (232 Carson X 179 Bright), grown on same plant with 148 Bowers

246 Bright from 2005, an open pollinated melon with a 64.74 inch girth

How I grew my 207.6 lb. Watermelon

Jane



By Jane Hunt, Sec/Treasurer GVGO

I must start by telling you I've only been growing Giant Watermelons for about 5 years

now. My husband Phil & good friend Marv Mitchell have been a great help in my quest to beat the Canadian Record. Bill Donkers of Brights Grove, Ontario, held the previous Canadian Record of 207.5 lbs. He was kind enough to provide me with the seeds that broke his record. Thanks Bill.

Growing Giant Watermelons is more associated with the hot, dry weather of the Southern US, than it is with our typical Canadian summers. The summer of 2005 was an extremely hot and dry and had a real impact on our pumpkin plants. The heat burned the leaves and stunted the growth of the pumpkin plants. On the other hand, our watermelon plants loved it.

We start with an area of 10' x 20' for each plant. We have been working on our soil for many years and feel that we are getting close to having it in great condition for watermelons. Over the years we've added copious amounts of aged manure and other organic materials. Our Organic Matter was at 24% & the PH level was 7.2 to start the season. We would prefer the PH level to be lower (6.7 or lower is best), but this is what we had to work with. At each planting site we dug a hole 2' x 2' & 1.5' deep and added a mixture of cow & sheep manure, peat moss & compost and covered it with clear plastic to warm up the soil.

We start our seeds @ the 15th of April and file the edges to help them break out of the hard casing. We have found that germinating the seeds can sometimes be a bit of a challenge. We soak the seeds for up to 6 hours in a mixture of water & 3% peroxide, which is diluted to about 5%. Just enough peroxide to kill any diseases the seed might be carrying. We place the seeds directly into a 2-litre pot filled with Miracle-Gro potting soil and place the pot in our germination cooler. In the bottom of the cooler is a germination pad that keeps the temperature at 85 degrees F, until germination occurs in a few days. They are slow to start and sometimes take up to 2 weeks to break the surface. Once they break through the surface we put them under artificial light to keep them from getting too leggy. Keep the light close to the top of the plant, so they're not reaching for the light and move the light up as the plant grows. We found that putting them in the window causes the seedling to become leggy as they reach for the sunlight.

We transplant the seedlings into the ground the 3rd week in May or whenever the conditions permit. We put them in the middle of our planting mounds and protect them with a mini greenhouse. Fertilize with a light solution of water soluble 10-52-10 to help promote root growth. Once they are established and starting to vine, we switched to a more balanced water soluble 20-20-20.

The main vine was growing out to about 8ft when I mistakenly cut the vine trying to thin out the plant. This caused the plant to shoot out more vines from the stump of the plant. We allowed these vines to grow out to the full 20ft before we terminated them. We also trimmed the plant's secondary vines to help keep the plant from getting out-of-control. The plant will root at each leaf nod. We don't bury the entire vine, as we found that it promoted disease and killed the plant the one time we tried it. We do however place a little dirt at every 4th or 5th leaf node to promote root growth. This will keep the vine flat on the soil and allow the roots to form at the other leaf nodes that aren't covered.

Pollinating the fruit is a bit of a challenge as well. The flowers are small and very fragile. We hand pollinated them and covered them up afterwards. We found the best time to do this was after the dew had dried from the plant (about 8-9am). For some reason or another, the pollen never formed on the female flowers until then. We took the male

flowers, peeled the petals off them and gently rub the male all around the female flower. You must make sure you see pollen on the flower or it won't take. Once the female has been pollinated cover it up with a small bag or cup. Don't try to cover it like you would your pumpkins because the flowers are too fragile.

Once the fruit begins to grow, watch the shape very closely. You want to make sure that it is growing straight. The shape of a bottle of water is what you're looking for. During this early period we gave the plant about a gallon of water a day, just enough to keep the soil damp, not soaked. As the fruit grew we increased that amount. During the peak periods we were giving each plant about 5-8 gallons of water per day, more if it was really dry. We continue to fertilize with 20-20-20 right up till the end of the season. We also foliar fed the plant with Neptune's Harvest Fish/Seaweed mix every two weeks. Disease & pest control are a must. We sprayed with Sevin to control bugs and used Benemyl as a fungicide. We had trouble with moles and mice as well. The moles were digging throughout the whole patch. We tried mothballs to keep them out, but this didn't work all that well. Next year we need to find something better. Mice were chewing on the vines in search of water. Our solution to that was to place a container of water in the patch for them to drink. Beside it we placed a bag of mouse poison to kill them off. This seemed to work fine.

Once the weather starts to cool (September) we covered the plant completely at night. This helped keep the plant warmer. We also covered the fruit at night with a small blanket and put Styrofoam under the fruit to keep the cool damp soil off bottom the fruit to keep it from rotting.

Over time you will be able to fine-tune your own techniques that suit the area where you grow. These directions are only meant as guidelines.



The male flowers, like the male flowers of other cucurbits, are devoid of any prominent baby fruit below the petals. They usually produced in abundance compared to the number of female flowers.

below the petals, which makes from the male flowers. It is the young ovary below the It even has the green stripes watermelon fruit!

In an organically-grown flowers will have the around to help with their use of chemical pesticides can wildlife which are not only pollination of flowers but will



The female flower, on the other hand, has a prominent baby fruit it easy to differentiate interesting to see that petals are quite hairy! we see on the

garden, watermelon necessary wildlife pollination. Excessive kill off beneficial needed to help with also eradicate

predatory ones that help to keep undesirable pest population in check.

If one notices poor fruit set in the garden despite the appearance of numerous female flowers, then it may be time for one to try hand-pollination of the female flowers. The procedure is pretty simple. One just has to go pick a male flower, strip off all its petals to reveal its pollen laden anthers and then brush the anthers against the center of a female

flower where the pistil is located. One male flower can be used to pollinate several other female flowers.

It can be difficult to tell whether watermelon flowers are pollinated properly since all of them will have the petals closing up and shriveling away after a day. One probably has to wait for a week or two and patiently watch the development of the fruit. As long as the ovary does not turn yellow and continues to swell at a rapid pace, the fruit is then on its way to become a mature, juicy watermelon!



Richard's fellow gardener grows the watermelon on top of a trellis so as to prevent the fruits from touching the ground. He told me the base of their previous watermelon fruit was disfigured with brown marks. It appeared as if some creature tried to chew away parts of the rind surface. I reckoned that could have been caused by snails or slugs that roamed the garden when the weather was wet and rainy.

Cantaloupe: Homegrown cantaloupe and honeydew offer an explosive taste that doesn't compare to their store-bought cousins. The key is plenty of moisture, sunlight, and heat. Melons demand two to three months of heat, which makes growing them in northern regions challenging, but not impossible. By using a black ground cover to warm soil and floating row covers to trap warm air near plants, gardeners in any part of the country can count on cutting into the homegrown goodness of melons. These sun-ripened fruits pack plenty of vitamin C and antioxidants into every bite, combining great taste with great nutrition.

Soil, Planting, and Care

Cantaloupe and honeydew thrive in warm soil. Don't plant until the ground temperature is above 70 degrees F, which typically occurs about the time peonies bloom in northern zones. Prior to planting, cover soil with plastic film to hasten soil warming.

Because cantaloupes and honeydew are heavy feeders, prepare your planting bed well. The quick way is to plant in soil amended with 4 to 6 inches of compost or well-rotted manure, if available. Then feed at planting and several times through the growing season with Bonnie Herb & Vegetable Plant Food.

There is another way to plant--a technique used by the hard-core. Excavate the soil 1 foot deep, add a 9-inch layer of fresh manure, and then cover that with 3 inches of soil mixed with compost. This creates a bed with a high-nitrogen soil base that is naturally warm because it generates a little heat as the manure composts. In yet another approach, some gardeners plant melons atop their compost piles to ensure a warm footing and adequate nitrogen.

Melons need room to roam. Space transplants 12 inches apart in rows 4 to 6 feet apart. Or, to save space, plant melons 12 inches apart at the base of a trellis. When trellising melons, tie vines to the trellis daily, using soft plant ties that won't crush stems. A trellis

for cantaloupe should be large: up to 8 feet tall and 20 feet wide in warmest climates. Wire fencing works well.

Trellising offers several advantages. Vines get better air circulation than on the ground, which reduces the chances of disease. In northern zones, vines also get more sunlight when on a trellis that's positioned at a slant toward the sun. You can also place a trellis against a bright reflective surface, which increases the amount of light reaching leaves and confuses melon aphids, who like to hide on the shadowy undersides of leaves. If you use a trellis, anchor it firmly so gusty summer winds don't topple the vine-covered trellis. Hold ripening fruit using slings made from netting, nylon hose, or mesh bags.

After transplanting in spring you can cover plants with floating row covers to exclude insects and trap warm air near plants; this is most important in cooler climates but is useful everywhere to keep certain pests off the plants. In cool climates you can also lay out a permeable black tarp or black landscape fabric over the area to help trap the sun's warmth. Simply plant through it (cut x-shaped slits).

Vines bear male and female flowers. Male flowers open first, joined by female blossoms about a week later. Female flowers have a small swelling at the base of the flower. When vines start to bear male and female flowers, remove row covers so bees can visit the flowers.

Tackle weeds before vines start to run, because later it will be impossible to step among vines without crushing them. Mulching soil under vines suppresses weeds and slows moisture evaporation from the soil. Of course, if you planted in a black cover, that is already done.

Water may be the most important variable that you supply; melons need a steady supply. Vines are most sensitive to drought during the time between transplanting and when fruits start to form. Keep soil consistently moist but not waterlogged, which will kill plants. It's typical for leaves to wilt under midday sun, but they shouldn't remain wilted into the evening. If possible, avoid overhead watering. Soaker hoses deliver water directly to the soil, preventing possible spread of fungus diseases on wet foliage. If you must use a sprinkler, then water vines very early in the morning so that leaves can dry early, which helps prevent fungus diseases.

For vines running on the ground, keep fruit from direct contact with soil to prevent rot and protect fruit from pests. Place ripening fruit on mulch, upturned coffee cans, or flower pots. If large critters such as groundhogs discover your melons, protect ripening fruits by covering them with plastic milk crates or similar boxes weighted down with a few bricks.

Some gardeners like to switch fertilizer during the course of the growing season. During the time between transplanting and when the first flowers open, use a fertilizer with more nitrogen than phosphorus and potassium, such as Bonnie's. Once flowering begins, use a fertilizer with less nitrogen and more phosphorus and potassium, such as African Violet Food or liquid seaweed.

An old garden adage suggests pinching off a vine's growing shoots as melons start to ripen to cause the plant to divert all its energy to the ripening fruit. Research has proven this false. The vine needs all its leaves to produce the sugars that sweeten fruit. Anything that reduces the total number of leaves available for sugar production reduces melon sweetness.

The more fruits that ripen at the same time, the less sweet they'll be, since the vine will

have to divide the leaves' sugar production between fruits. In warmer climates with a long growing season, experienced growers often prune off all but one newly forming melon every 2 weeks. Ripening 1 melon at a time yields maximum sweetness. As you gain experience, you'll develop your own technique.

In colder regions, remove any blossoms that start to develop within 50 days of your area's first average frost date. This ensures remaining, larger fruits will ripen before frost.

Troubleshooting

The key to a sweet melon is lots of sugar, which is made by the leaves. So anything that hurts the leaves also hurts the quality of the fruit. Be on the lookout for fungus diseases, which spread rapidly. Alternaria leaf spot and gummy stem blight produce spots on leaves, while stem blight also forms bleached or tan sections on stems and rot on fruit. Downy mildew causes yellow or pale green leaf spots, while powdery mildew produces white spots on leaves. Treat fungus diseases with fungicides. Check with your local garden center or Extension agent to learn which fungicides are approved in your state and more about the disease you're fighting.

Melon aphids can quickly colonize a vine, so inspect leaf undersides daily. If you spot aphids, treat them with insecticidal soap.

Spotted and striped cucumber beetles can attack vines, transmitting bacterial wilt disease, which causes vines to collapse. Infected vines don't recover. Treat adult beetles with rotenone or a pyrethrum-based insecticide; apply at dusk to avoid harming honey bees.