

Watermelon Variety Trial, 1990

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Introduction

Early maturity is an important factor in watermelon production in the desert southwest where harvest begins in mid-May and continues into July. Planting begins during mid-January on large south-facing Yuma beds to increase soil temperature and promote early development. Acreage in the Yuma area has been fairly stable at 1,000 acres in production.

Methods and Materials

Ten varieties of watermelon were planted with a grower cooperator south of Yuma near Somerton. An Earthway planter was used to plant 50 foot single row plots for a water date of February 2.

Evaluations made through the season included percent vine cover of the bed and count of potentially marketable fruit on May 23, varietal characteristics from May 25 - 31, and vine holding ability on June 4. Varietal quality characteristics which were evaluated include representative melon size and weight, external and internal color, and flavor.

Results and Discussion

Results of the trial are summarized in Table 1. The standard variety used in the Yuma area is Royal Sweet, which had good vine strength, fruit set and internal quality. Royal Star matured a bit earlier than Royal Sweet but had less internal color and flavor, while Regency matured later with quality characteristics similar to those of Royal Star. The largest melon was produced by Jubilation, which had light stripes on a dark background, as well as excellent flavor and vine holding ability. Crimson Tide produced an early melon with excellent flavor and color, while Cardinal had a smaller melon which also had excellent color and good flavor. Tiger Baby produced an oval-shaped, refrigerator-sized melon with fair internal quality.

Table 1. Evaluation of watermelon varieties from the February 2, 1990 planting with Waymon Farms Inc. near Somerton.

Variety	Vine Vigor (% bed cover)	Fruit Set (fruit/plot)	Fruit Striping	Fruit Size (inches)	Fruit Weight (pounds)	Internal Color (a)	Flavor	Vine Holding (% collapse)	Comments
Cardinal (Asgrow)	60	21	dk. on lt.	12 x 7	14	1	2	30	Smaller fruit, good color, taste, moderately coarse texture
Crimson Tide (Northrup King)	60	23	dk. on lt.	12 x 9	20	1	1	20	Early, red flesh, excellent flavor
Jubilantion (Northrup King)	70	25	lt. on dk.	16 x 9	26	3	1	10	Very large melon, light red flesh, excellent flavor and texture
Mirage (Asgrow)	60	23	dk. on lt.	14 x 9	21	3	3	20	Very light colored flesh, fair taste, coarse texture
Regency (Petoseed)	80	22	dk. on lt.	14 x 8	16	2	2	30	Light red flesh, fair to good flavor, coarse texture
Royal Star (Petoseed)	80	22	dk. on lt.	13 x 8	18	2	2	20	Light red flesh, fair flavor, good texture
Royal Sweet (Petoseed)	80	24	dk. on lt.	13 x 8	19	2	2	40	Good flesh color, good flavor
Tiger Baby (Petoseed)	50	37	dk. on dk.	8 x 7	8	2	2	20	Small round melon, light red flesh, fair to poor flavor, coarse
200 (Abbott and Cobb)	50	18	dk. on lt.	10 x 8	12	1	2	90	Very red, soft flesh, fair flavor, coarse texture
600 (Abbott and Cobb)	30	6	dk. on lt.	15 x 7	18	-	-	40	Poor production of very slender, long melon, poor quality

(a) 1 = most desirable, 2 = moderate, 3 = undesirable