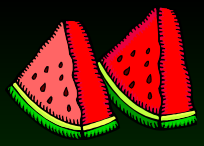
Melons

Larry Sagers
Utah State University
Horticulture Specialist
Thanksgiving Point



Imagine...

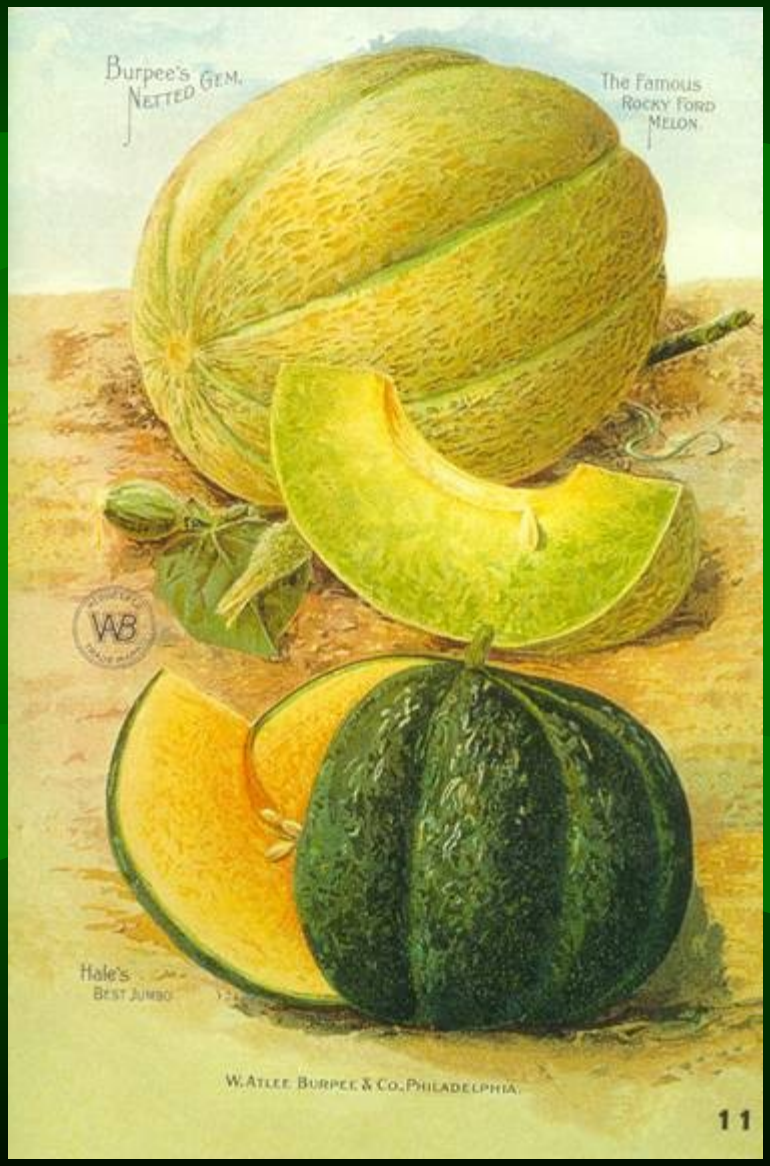
- The tastiest of all foods
- Sweet and juicy
- Wonderful aroma and taste
- Melt in your mouth texture
- Best of all, you could grow it in your own garden

What fits this description?

Melons…of course!

- Many different varieties…

Melons


Burpee's Netted Gem.
The Famous Rocky Ford Melon.
Hale's Best Jumbo
W. Atlee Burpee & Co., Philadelphia.
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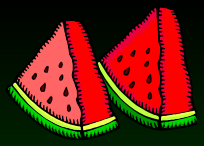
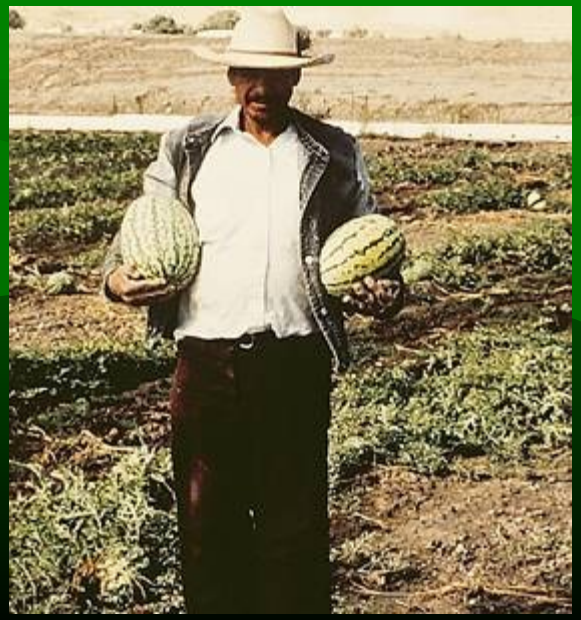


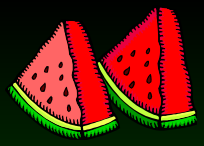
Homegrown Melons

- Only home-grown melons qualify for the honor of the best
- Not the tasteless, colored fruits that are picked hard and green and shipped hundreds of miles to sit on a store shelf until you take it home
- I am talking about melons picked at the peak of flavor and taken a few short steps to waiting recipients who anticipate their magnificent flavors

Melons + Heat = Delicious!

- Melons love heat!
- When other plants are “wimping out”, melons thrive
- Warm days and cool nights are the perfect prescription for delightful treats





Melons…the Sagers Way

- The following is the “Sagers Family Method” of growing melons
- If you have never grown good melons in your own garden, follow these suggestions for tasty treats from your garden

Step 1 – Choosing Variety

- Start with the right variety
- Growing up, I tried in vain to get melons to ripen
  - The only seed sold locally came from warm season areas

Step 1 – Choosing Variety

- Some varieties will not ripen here
  - Congo, Striped Klondike, Jubilee, Charleston Gray, and other long season varieties

Step 1 – Choosing Variety

- Choose varieties that are proven to do well in our area
  - Family Fun
  - Yellow Baby Hybrid
  - Sweet Favorite Hybrid
  - Mirage Hybrid
  - Mickylee
  - Minilee
  - Crimson Sweet
  - Cal Sweet
  - Golden Crown

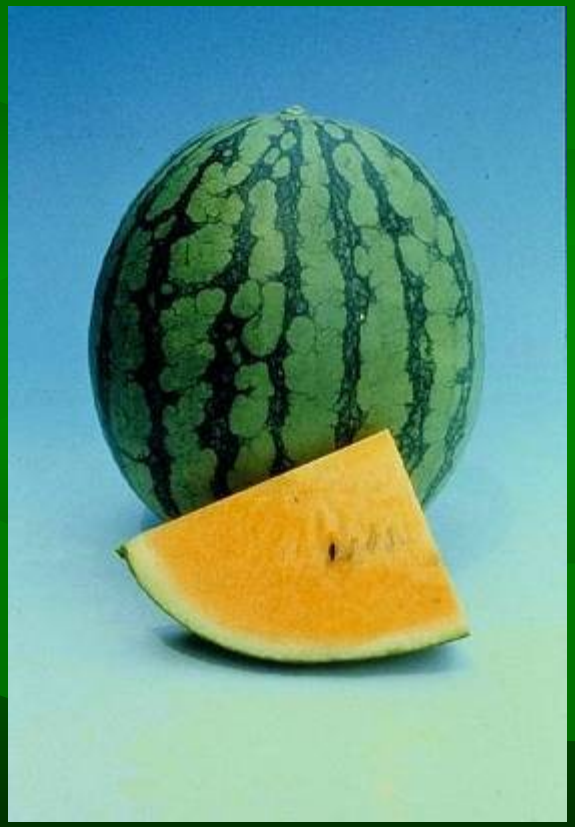
Crimson Sweet Melons

Step 1 – Choosing Variety

- Most commercial growers in Green River plant Crimson Sweet type melons
- More round than oblong – sweet flavorful flesh

Step 1 – Choosing Variety

- It is worth the effort to plant varieties that are adapted to our area
- Hybrid seeds are more expensive, but production is usually better



Step 1 – Choosing Variety

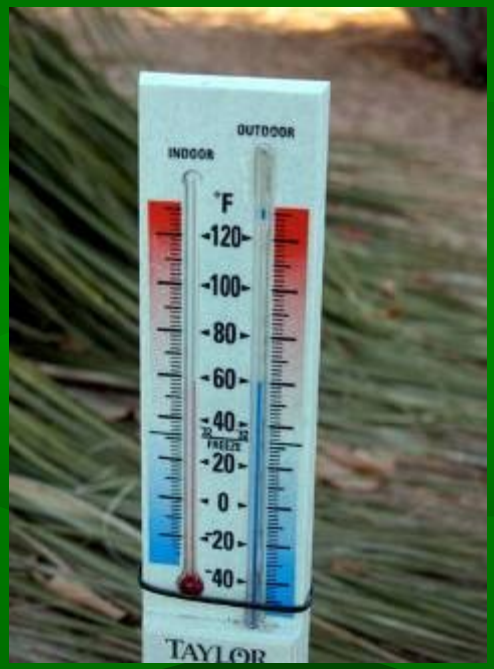
Step 1 – Choosing Variety

- Selected cantaloupe varieties include:
  - Summet
  - Burpee Hybrid
  - Magnum
  - Ambrosia
  - Classic
  - Harper Hybrid
  - Mission
  - Rocky Sweet

Melons

Step 2 - Planting

- Plant at the right time and the right way
- Set out seeds or transplants when the soil warms above 70 degrees
- Seedless varieties need temperatures above 80 degrees to germinate
- Plant seeds 1-2 inches deep



Step 2 - Planting

- Space plants 2-3 feet apart in rows spaced 3-6 feet apart
- Small fruit types can be planted in rows 3-4 feet apart

Step 2 - Planting

- Melons need good, well-drained soil
- Clay soils do not raise a good crop
- If your soil is bad, create raised beds by adding organic matter to improve the drainage and aeration

Step 2 – Planting - Transplants

- Prefer transplants?
- Do not get those that are too large
- Start plants inside in peat pots or pellets 3-4 weeks before outside planting date

Step 2 – Planting - Transplants

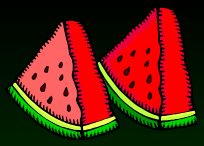
- Melons do not transplant well from pony packs
- Do not disturbed their roots
- Should not be starting to vine

Step 2 – Planting - Transplants

- Transplants that are stressed or damaged while transplanting seldom produce good vines or fruits

Step 2 - Planting

- Melons need full sun and heat
- Clear plastic mulches raise soil temperature by as much as 10 degrees
  - Helps melons come into production two to three weeks earlier than normal
  - Not only produces earlier melons, but individual melons are larger



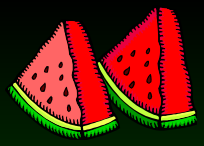
Step 2 - Planting

- Minimum spacing essential for all but bush-type melons is two by four feet, but most like even more room
- Close planting results in little or no fruit production

Step 2 - Planting

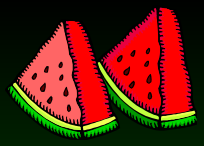
Step 3 - Watering

- Melons need adequate water
- They aren’t called watermelons for nothing
- If they are stressed, they stop growing and do not set fruit



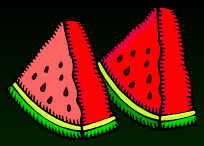
Step 3 - Watering

- Overwatering fruiting plants causes them to collapse from lack of oxygen
- Check the soil moisture regularly and re-apply as necessary before the melons start to wilt or go into stress
- Allow the top 1-2 inches of soil to dry between watering



Step 4 - Fertilizing

- Watermelons need large vines to produce sugars to sweeten the fruits
- Weak, neglected vines produce spindly, poor quality fruits
- Use the right fertilizer
- Use a high phosphorus fertilizer to promote fruiting



Step 4 – Fertilizing

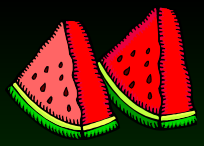
- Fertilizer with a ratio of one part nitrogen to four parts phosphorus is ideal at planting
- Make your own by mixing fertilizers together or purchase a high phosphorus product
- Add nitrogen 30 and 60 days after planting to keep the vines growing
- Large vines are produced with plenty of water and fertilizer, so allow plenty of room

Step 5 – Weeding

- Melons are not good competitors
- They do not do well if weeds shade them or compete with them for moisture and fertilizer
- Remove small weeds to avoid stunting or stressing the melons
- Avoid disturbing the roots by cultivation as this will weaken the vines and keeps them from producing fruit

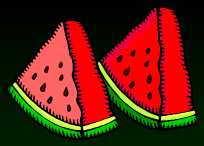
Remember...

- Seedless varieties require a pollinating (non-seedless) variety close by to produce fruit



Step 6 – Harvesting

- Count the days from when the plants or seeds were planted
- Plan on 80+ days, depending on variety and growing conditions



Step 6 - Harvesting

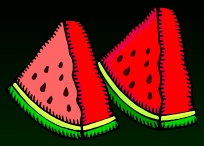
- The curly tendril immediately opposite where melon is attached to vine turns brown and shriveled when the melon is ripe
- The part of melon resting on the soil changes from white to yellow
- Pick melons as they ripen

Step 6 Harvesting

Step 6 – Harvesting

Step 6 – Harvesting

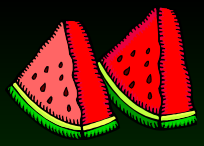
- Yield: several melons per vine, depending on growing conditions
- Storage: can be stored for a short time in a cool location



Muskmelon vs Cantaloupes

- Muskmelon (*Cucumis melo* 'reticulatus') is called cantaloupe
- Cantaloupes are not commercially grown in the United States
- Cantaloupes (*Cucumis melo* ‘cantalupensis') are rough warty fruits
- Muskmelon have the characteristic netting on the outside

True Cantaloupe
Blewah (*Cucumis melo* 'cantalupensis‘)



Honey dew

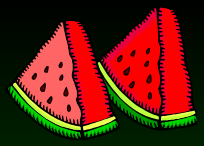
- Smooth, greenish white rind, turning
- creamy when ripe
- Light green, sweet flesh varieties available
- Fruit 7 x 71⁄2 inches, 5 to 6 pounds Cultivars: ‘Earlidew,’ ‘Honey Dew Green Flesh,’ ‘Tam Dew,’ ‘Honey Dew Orange’ (orange flesh)

Honey Dew

Casaba

- A non-slip, late maturing, corrugated yellow or greenish yellow rind
- White, spicy, sweet tender flesh
- Fruit acorn-shaped, 8 x 7 inches, 7 to 8 pounds
- Cultivars: ‘Casaba Golden Beauty,’ ‘Casaba Sungold’, ‘Marygold’

Casaba



Crenshaw

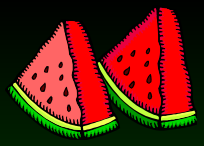
- Large, late maturing, yellow and green corrugated rind without netting
- Pinkish orange, sweet, tender flesh with distinctive flavor
- Fruit is elongated with a flattened stem end, 9 x 7 inches, 7 to 10 pounds
- Cultivars: ‘Crenshaw,’ ‘Honeyshaw’ (early), ‘Early Hybrid Crenshaw,’ ‘Crenshaw Blanco,’ ‘Golden Crenshaw’

Crenshaw

Canary

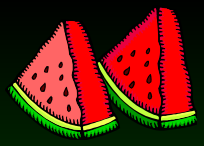
- Late maturing, bright yellow corrugated rind
- Flesh is pale green to white with a sweet and distinctive flavor
  Fruit is oval, similar to crenshaw, 8 x 6 inches, 6 to 7 pounds
- Cultivars: ‘Sweet Yellow Canary,’ ‘Tenerife’ ‘Amy’

Melon ‘Amy’



Melon Diseases

- Melons are usually not bothered by many pests
- Verticillium and fusarium wilts often develop if areas are gardened for many years
- Rotate planting locations and use resistant varieties if plants die in midsummer



Melon Diseases - Wilt

- Plants wilt and die, older leaves first
- Light brown streaks show inside the stem when it is split lengthwise
- Destroy infected plants immediately and rotate planting location

Melon Diseases – Powdery Mildew

- White powdery spots on leaves and stems eventually enlarges and covers entire leaf
- Plant resistant varieties
- Dusting sulfur may help, but will burn some varieties

Melon Diseases – Mosaic

- Irregularly shaped light and dark green spots on leaves
- Plants become stunted and melons may be misshapen or discolored
- Aphids transmit this virus but controlling the aphids is not practical
- Destroy infected plants immediately and rotate planting location

Melon Insects - Aphids

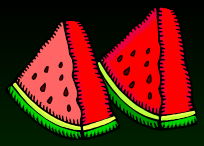
- Deformed or curled leaves
- Green, brown, or black soft bodied insects on under sides of leaves
- Sticky honeydew or black sooty mold sometimes present
- Treatment
  - Strong water spray or insecticidal soap spray
  - Must get spray on the insects to be effective Some damage can be tolerated

Melon Insects – Squash Bugs

- Leaves with small specks that turn yellow, then brown
- Vines wilt from point of attack to end of vine
- Adults are about 5/8 inch long, grayish or yellowish brown
- Treatment
  - Trap adults beneath boards in spring--turn over boards in morning and kill bugs
  - Handpick adults, egg mass and young bugs off plants

Melons

- Melons are not the easiest plants to grow, but they are worth the effort
- The hot summer days are made a little easier with melons as treats for the perfect refreshment
- Plant some this year



The End

Happy Eating!