



Watermelon is native to the hot deserts of Africa and is part of the gourd family. Because of its native origins it needs at least 3 months of hot weather to grow. Watermelons come in all different shapes, sizes and colors - as Hubby can attest.

Seed Starting/Propagation:

- Soak seeds prior to planting, space about a foot apart with plenty of space in the rows. Eight feet is the recommendation, you can also train them up a very heavy duty and supported trellis and save on room.
- Plant in full sun in rich soil that is at least 65 degrees.
- If direct planting, it also helps to cover with a plastic cage until sprouting occurs.

Care:

- Once vines start to grow, mulch heavily.
- Keep watered regularly, they need plenty of moisture to thrive. (Note to self: This may have been why mine did not do well in the past, keep moist!)
- Keep leaves dry to avoid fungal diseases and mildew
- Reduce water when melons are almost ripe to develop their sweetness.

Harvesting:

- There are a few tricks to test watermelon for ripeness, here are a few ideas I've come across:
- The stem slips easily off when melon is rotated.
- Thump on the melon with your knuckle, if it makes a dull, hollow sound it is ready.
- When the tendril opposite of the stem is brown and dry.
- For cantaloupe, the scent smells very strongly of melon and the netting pattern becomes very prominent.
- Melons don't really store so just pick and eat. Although some people pickle the rinds.

Seed Saving:

When the fruit is ripe the seeds are ready. Just slice open the melon, pull out the seeds, rinse and lay to dry in a cool, dry place. Store in an airtight container or bag for up to 5 years.

Nutrients:

Good source of vitamin A and vitamin C. Also contains smaller amounts of other nutrients and is a good source for replenishing electrolytes..