

Watermelons

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In Texas, watermelons are a favorite summer treat. They are made up of about 90 percent water, making them the perfect way to quench thirst and satisfy a sweet tooth. Watermelons are a member of the cucurbit family, along with squash, cucumbers, and pumpkins. They are vining crops that are best suited to large gardens because they require a lot of space to grow.

🌱 Grow it

Varieties

Seeded

- Sangria, Crimson Sweet, Summer Flavor 720

Seedless

- Super Seedless 7167, Chunky
- *For seedless varieties to set fruit, seeded varieties must be planted with them for cross-pollination. Plant one seeded plant for every two seedless plants in the same rows.

Soil Preparation

- In the winter or early spring, loosen the soil 8 to 10 inches deep.
- Incorporate 5 to 10 pounds of compost for every 100 square feet.
- Work the soil into mounded rows that are 4 to 8 inches high and 12 to 14 inches wide. Space the rows 6 to 8 feet apart.

Planting

- Begin planting after the soil warms in the spring and all danger of frost is past.
- Plant groups of 2 to 3 seeds at a depth of ½ to 1 inch. Space each group of seeds 4 to 5 feet apart down the row.
- Watermelons can also be planted as transplants.

Fertilizing

- Fertilize watermelons twice during the season.
- Make the first application at planting. Apply a 3-1-2 or 15-5-10 fertilizer in a “band” by creating a 4- to 6-inch-deep trench on the planting mound, 2 inches to the side of the row of seeds or transplants. Use 4 pounds of fertilizer for every 60 to 90 feet

of row. Spread the fertilizer evenly in the trench, cover it, and water it in. Be sure that the fertilizer does not touch the seeds.

- Make a second application when the runners on the vines are about 6 inches long. Use 2 to 3 pounds of a 21-0-0 fertilizer for every 60 to 90 feet of row. Scatter it 2 to 3 feet to the side of the row, and mix it lightly with the soil.

Watering

- Supply melons with 1 to 2 inches of water every 10 to 14 days.
- Water early in the morning, at the base of the plant, to reduce the likelihood of disease.

Care During the Season

- Keep the beds weed-free by hand-pulling weeds or shallow hoeing.

Insects & Diseases

- Cucumber beetles, aphids, squash bugs, white flies, and leaf miners are common pests.
- Check foliage and fruit for signs of disease. Some potential signs include leaf deformities, brown spots or lesions, powdery white growth, or decay.
- For information on controlling insects and diseases, contact your county Extension agent.

Harvesting

- Most melons can be harvested 80 to 100 days after planting.
- Watermelons are ready to be harvested when the melon loses its glossy color, the ground spot on the underside of the melon turns a creamy color, and the tendril near the point where the melon is attached to the vine dries. Use a knife to cut the melon from the vine.



Sun:
Full



Soil:
Deep,
Well-drained



Planting:
Warm



Harvest:
Summer



Life Cycle:
Annual



Buy it

- Choose a watermelon that is free from dents, bruises, or cuts, is heavy for its size, and has a creamy yellow spot on the underside where the melon was resting on the soil.

Store it

- At room temperature, uncut watermelons can be stored for up to 10 days.
- Once cut, refrigerate them in an airtight container for up to 5 days.
- For canning and preservation instructions, visit nchfp.uga.edu.

Use it

Shrimp Tacos with Southwest Watermelon Salsa

Course: Main Dish
Serves: 8

Ingredients:

Watermelon Salsa

- 3 cups seedless watermelon, diced
- ½ cup red bell pepper, diced
- ½ cup green bell pepper, diced
- 1/3 cup red onion, diced
- 1 cup cilantro
- 1 serrano pepper, diced
- 4 Tbsp. lime juice
- 1 Tbsp. sugar

Shrimp Tacos

- 1½ pounds medium shrimp, peeled and deveined
- 1½ tsp. smoked paprika
- 1½ tsp. ground cumin
- 1½ tsp. ground chili powder
- ¼ tsp. ground cayenne pepper
- 2 Tbsp. olive oil
- 16 medium corn tortillas

Instructions:

Watermelon Salsa

Gently toss together all of the salsa ingredients. Cover and chill until ready to serve.

Shrimp Tacos

In a large bowl, combine the shrimp, paprika, cumin, chili powder, and cayenne pepper. Toss well to coat the shrimp.

Heat the olive oil in a non-stick skillet over medium-high heat.

Add the shrimp and sauté for about 5 to 7 minutes, or until shrimp are fully cooked. Fully cooked shrimp are opaque and have an internal temperature of 120°F.

Heat the tortillas in a skillet or microwave until warm.

Add shrimp to each taco, top with watermelon salsa, and serve!

Aguas Frescas: Watermelon and Lime

Course: Drink
Serves: 8

Ingredients:

- 5 cups seedless watermelon, cubed
- 3 cups water
- 5–6 mint leaves
- 1 lime, sliced
- 1 cup ice

Instructions:

Add watermelon, 1 cup of water, and mint leaves into a blender. Blend until liquefied.

Pour the watermelon mixture into a 2-quart pitcher, add 2 cups of water and ice, and stir together.

Garnish the drink with thinly sliced lime rings and enjoy.

Serve or store in the refrigerator for up to 2 days.

Learn about it

Watermelon's bright red color is the product of a red pigment called lycopene. Lycopene is an antioxidant that promotes heart, skin, and lung health. Watermelon also contains citrulline, a phytonutrient that benefits the heart, circulatory system, and immune system. Watermelon is high in vitamin C and is a good source of magnesium, potassium, copper, and vitamin A.¹

¹U.S. Department of Agriculture. (2019). Watermelons, raw. FoodData Central. Retrieved from <https://fdc.nal.usda.gov/fdc-app.html#/food-details/167765/nutrients>

