

URBAN FARMER

LOVE THE EARTH

From Seed to Harvest: A beginner's guide to growing watermelon

Watermelon is a favorite summer treat that can be enjoyed raw, in a fruit salad or even made into a dessert pizza. The sprawling plant is fun to grow for families. Planting watermelons from seeds allows gardeners to handpick which sort of fruit they want, as watermelon comes in seedless, different colors, large and small varieties. Seedless is one of the more common plants, and although the fruit is not completely seed free, the seeds are small, transparent and edible.

To plant:

Watermelon seedlings are tender and do not handle frost well, so plant after the last frost date. Plant watermelons outdoors, or if the summer season is shorter, plant them inside up to four weeks before the last frost date. Sow seeds 1 inch deep. Watermelon grow best in mounds, so plant six to eight seeds per mound with mounds space 4 feet apart.

To grow:

Once seedlings appear, thin them to two or three per mound. When they are younger, watermelon plants require lots up water, up to 2 inches per week. They grow best in soil with a pH of 6.0 to 6.8. Pruning the plant is not necessary, but it may direct more energy to growing the fruits. If you choose to prune, remove the small vines that grow laterally. To prevent rotting, gently lift the fruit as it gets bigger and turn it. You can also mulch with plastic around the plants. Common pests include cucumber beetles and vine borers. To prevent these, use floating row covers but remove them once the plants begin to flower.



[Sugar Baby Watermelon seeds](#)
[available at ufseeds.com](http://ufseeds.com)

To harvest:

There are a few tactics to determine if a watermelon is ripe, and it is important to use them because once a watermelon is picked, it doesn't ripen any further. One way to determine if a watermelon is ready to harvest is to check the bottom spot of the melon where it sits on the ground. If a watermelon is ripe, that spot will turn from white to yellow. Other ways to determine if a watermelon is ripe is to gently knock the rind with your fist. If it sounds hollow, it may be ready to pick. A third tactic is to examine the small vine tendrils near the fruit. If they have dried up from green to brown and are beginning to fall off, the watermelon is ripe.

The watermelon also may take on a dull look instead of a bright sheen when it is ready to harvest. To harvest, take a knife and cut the watermelon from the plant, cutting the stem close to the fruit. After harvesting, it is suggested to chill the watermelon prior to serving.



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What watermelons crave:

Since watermelons have a long growing period and produce big fruits, they are heavy feeders. Prior to planting, amend soil with compost and a higher nitrogen fertilizer. Once vines begin to ramble, side dress plants with a 5-10-5 fertilizer and again once the melons are set.

Where to buy watermelon seeds:

Urban Farmer sells multiple varieties of watermelon seeds, some with the potential to reach up to 50 pounds. Other varieties have a yellow or orange flesh. Check out watermelon seeds on our website at ufseeds.com!



[Tendersweet Orange Watermelon seeds available at ufseeds.com](http://ufseeds.com)



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