

Cantaloupes and Honeydew Melons

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Julia Minter, Jayla Fry, and Dr. Larry Stein

Cantaloupes and honeydew melons are vining crops that are grown during the warm season of Texas. Although commonly referred to as cantaloupes, the proper name of this melon is muskmelon, named for its strong, pleasant odor. True cantaloupes are small fruits with warty skin that are rarely grown in the United States. Honeydew melons have white or greenish-white rinds with sweet green, white, or orange flesh.

Grow it

Varieties

Muskmelon

- Ambrosia, Hale's Best, Perlita, TAM Uvalde

Honeydew

- Honey Dew Green Flesh, TAM Dew

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 feet apart.

Planting

- Begin planting after the soil warms in the spring and all danger of frost is past.
- Plant groups of two to three seeds at a depth of $\frac{1}{2}$ to 1 inch. Space each group of seeds 2 to 3 feet apart down the row.
- Melons can also be planted as transplants.

Fertilizing

- Fertilize melons twice during the season.
- Make the first application at planting. Apply a 3-1-2 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 2 to 3 pounds of fertilizer for every 60 to 70 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 fertilizer application when the vines begin to run. 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 inch of water every week.
- Water early in the morning, at the base of the plant, to reduce the likelihood of disease.

Care During the Season

- After the seedlings are up, thin them to one to two plants per group by pinching or cutting off the unwanted plants at the base.
- Keep the beds weed-free by hand-pulling weeds or shallow hoeing.
- Vines can be trellised to reduce the space needed in the garden. You can support the fruit using netting, pantyhose, or onion bags, although it is not required.

Insects & Diseases

- Cucumber beetles, squash bugs, spider mites, and aphids are common pests on melons.
- 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.
- Cantaloupes** are ready to be harvested when the fruit rind changes to a yellowish-orange color, the stem begins to separate from the fruit, and the odor gets strong. It should be easy to pull melons from the vine.
- Honeydew melons** are ready to be harvested when the skin begins to turn yellow and the end of the fruit opposite the stem begins to soften. Cut the melon from the vine.



Sun:
Full



Soil:
Deep,
Well-drained



Planting:
Warm



Harvest:
Summer



Life Cycle:
Annual



🛒 Buy it

- Choose a cantaloupe that has a sweet smell and a golden rind without a green hue.
- Choose a honeydew melon that is heavy for its size and has a smooth, pale-yellow rind.

🍽️ Store it

- Uncut melons can be stored at room temperature.
- Once cut, refrigerate melons in an airtight container. Cantaloupes can be stored for up to 5 days¹ and honeydew melons can be stored for 2 weeks.²



Use it

Ginger Melon Salad

Course: Side Dish
Serves: 4

Ingredients:

- 4 cups melons, cubed or balled (cantaloupe, honeydew melons, and/or watermelon)
- ¼ cup pineapple juice
- 1½ Tbsp. honey
- ¼ tsp. ground ginger

Instructions:

Rinse produce under cool, running water before cutting.

Cut melons into cubes or ball them and then combine.

In a separate bowl, combine the pineapple juice, honey, and ground ginger.

Pour mixture over melon cubes and toss.

Grilled Fruit Kabobs

Course: Side Dish, Snack
Serves: 6

Ingredients:

- 1 tsp. mint leaves, whole
- 1 tsp. mint leaves, chopped
- 1½ Tbsp. honey
- 2 Tbsp. water
- 3 cups watermelon, diced
- 2 cups peaches, sliced
- 3 cups cantaloupe, diced
- 2 cups pineapple, diced
- ¼ tsp. kosher salt

Instructions:

Rinse produce under cool, running water before slicing.

Heat grill to 450°F.

In a medium saucepan on the stove, stir together water and honey and bring to a simmer. Infuse honey water by simmering with whole mint leaves for 1 minute. Remove mint leaves. Pour the liquid in a jar, and let it cool in the refrigerator.

Slide cut fruit onto 6 wooden or metal skewers.

Grill for 30 to 60 seconds on each side.

Leaving fruit on skewers, use a basting brush to glaze the honey water over fruit. Sprinkle kosher salt and chopped mint leaves over grilled fruit skewers.



📖 Learn about it

Melons are a sweet, fat-free way to add nutrition to your diet. Cantaloupes provide a good source of vitamins A and C and are rich in potassium and folic acid. Additionally, they contain important micronutrients such as zinc, copper, and iron. Honeydew melons are also a good source of vitamin C and potassium.³

¹ Have a Plant. (2022). *Cantaloupe*. Produce for Better Health Foundation. Retrieved from <https://fruitsandveggies.org/fruits-and-veggies/cantaloupe/>.

² Have a Plant. (2022). *Honeydew Melon*. Produce for Better Health Foundation. Retrieved from <https://fruitsandveggies.org/fruits-and-veggies/honeydew/>.

³ U.S. Department of Agriculture. (2019). *Melons, honeydew, raw*. FoodData Central. Retrieved from <https://fdc.nal.usda.gov/fdc-app.html#/food-details/169911/nutrients>.