

**Latin Name/Genus:** Cantaloupes (musk melons) & Honeydews: *Cucurbita melo*; Watermelons: *Citrullus lanatus*  
Family: *Cucurbitaceae*

**Difficulty:** Easy in a greenhouse or cloche, or outdoors in long, warm summers (can be somewhat challenging without these conditions)

**Season:** Warm season

**Exposure:** Full-sun

**Zone:** Between Zones 4-10

**Timing:** It is essential to start seeds indoors or in a greenhouse 4-6 weeks after the last frost date. Transplant when the plants are 5 weeks old. Optimal soil temperature for germination: 20-25°C. Seeds should sprout in 5-10 days.

**Starting:** Sow seeds 1cm (1/2") deep. Set transplants 60-90cm (24-36") apart in rows 1.5-2m (5-6') apart.

**Days to Maturity:** From transplant date.

**Growing:** Ideal pH: 6.0-6.8. Choose a warm, well-drained soil. Add dolomite lime and compost or well-rotted manure to the bed and 1/2-1 cup of balanced organic fertilizer beneath each transplant. Melons need warm growing conditions. Use black plastic mulch, cloches, or floating row covers. Success may improve in raised beds. Melons plants require 8-10 weeks of good, hot growing weather from the middle of June to the end of August. During that time, a melon vine must grow 5-9 leaves before starting to flower, then set 4 or more male flowers before making its first female flower, and then ripen its fruit before cool, damp weather sets in. Melons do not ripen off the vine. During the entire growing season, make sure to provide ample water.

**Nutrient Preferences:** Melons are heavy feeders, requiring nitrogen-heavy applications during the beginning stages of growth, followed by heavier ratios of phosphorus and potassium to follow in later stages, appreciating organic compost as a 'snack'.

**Harvest:** Fruit will ripen in late August to early September. Ripe cantaloupe will easily detach from the vine when light finger pressure is applied to the stem; watermelon is ripe when the tendril nearest to the fruit withers and dries up.

**Companion Planting:** Melons are great companions for corn, marigolds, nasturtiums, pumpkin, radish, squash, and sunflowers; avoid planting near potatoes. Melon leaves are calcium-rich, so they're great for the compost heap.

