

Fertilization: After the vines develop runners, side dress with a nitrogen fertilizer (34-0-0) using 1-2 tablespoons per plant or mound. Incorporate the fertilizer at least 6 inches away from the plants.

Problems

Weeds: Plastic and organic mulches effectively control weeds. Vigorous vine growth will also smother weeds.

Insects and Diseases:

Insect	Identification	Control
Aphids	Green or black soft-bodied insects that feed on underside of leaves. Leaves become crinkled and curled. May transmit virus diseases. Secreted honeydew makes plants appear shiny, wet, or sticky.	Use insecticidal soaps or strong water stream to dislodge insects.
Cucumber Beetles	Adults have stripes or spots and feed on leaves and vines which reduces vigor. They transmit bacterial disease. Larvae bore into roots and stems causing plants to wilt and die.	Application of chemicals at first appearance is needed to control the pest.
Disease	Symptom	Control
Powdery Mildew	White fungal patches start on older leaves. The disease eventually spreads to all plant parts. The foliage dies, exposing fruits to the sun, which causes premature ripening.	Plant resistant varieties.
Wilt Diseases	Leaves wilt on one or more vines. Plants often die. Streaking, slime formation, or gummy exudates visible on stems. Diseases are caused by different pathogens.	Identify causal disease. Treat disease as recommended once identified.
Virus	Leaves are light green, mottled, malformed, dwarfed and curled. Early infection affects fruit shape and flavor. An aphid transmitted disease.	Control aphids. Destroy severely infected plants.

Harvest and Storage

Cantaloupe requires 35-45 days to mature from flowering, depending on the temperature. Use the following guide to determine fruit maturity. The netting gets coarse and rough, the stem breaks (slips) away from the vine easily, and the background color of the fruit turns from green to yellow (see photo). Pick melons as they ripen. Cantaloupe will store for 1-2 weeks if held at 45-50F.

Productivity

Plant 3-4 cantaloupe per person for fresh use and an additional 3-4 plants for juicing or freezing. Expect 100 fruits per 100 feet of row.

Nutrition

Cantaloupe are mostly water. A quarter of a melon has about 50 calories, is low in fat and is an excellent source of vitamin A and vitamin C.

Frequently Asked Questions

● **Why do the first blossoms drop off my muskmelon plants?** The first flowers to appear on the vines are male. The female flowers, which open later, have a swelling at the base that forms the fruit. After bees pollinate these female flowers, the fruit develops.

● **What causes poor fruit set and low yields?** The failure for female flowers to set and develop melons is due to a lack of proper pollination by bees, very hot weather or water stress.

● **How can I grow muskmelons in a small garden?** Cantaloupe plants can be trained to a fence or trellis or grown in a large pot. After the fruits begin to enlarge they will need support or the fruit weight may damage the vines.

● **Do muskmelons cross-pollinate with other vine crops?** No. Cantaloupe do not cross-pollinate with cucumbers, watermelons, squash or pumpkins. Different varieties of cantaloupe do cross-pollinate, but the effect of this cross-pollination is not evident unless the seeds are saved and planted the following year.

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