

# Cantaloupe (Muskmelon)



**Sun:** Plant in full sun (6 to 8 hours). Space 24 inches apart within rows or 1 plant per 5- to 7-gallon container. Plant in April after all danger of frost has passed.

**Soil:** Amend with organic matter to create a well-drained soil. Avoid planting in unamended sandy or heavy clay soils. If the soil test shows pH is below 6.2, apply lime in January or February as recommended. If the pH is above 6.2, apply a pH-neutral calcium supplement, such as gypsum. Add  $\frac{1}{4}$  cup gypsum per plant to prevent blossom-end rot.

If growing in a container garden, amend each pot with  $\frac{1}{4}$  cup gypsum. For proper drainage, use potting mix and ensure containers have drainage holes. Alternatively, consider using self-watering containers.

**Water:** Keep soil consistently moist but not saturated. Apply 1 to 2 inches of water each week and more during hot summer days. Avoid wetting plant leaves to prevent fungal disease. Mulch helps retain moisture.

**Plant:** Direct sow seeds about  $\frac{1}{2}$  to 1 inch deep in raised hills to ensure good soil drainage. When sprouts are 4 to 5 inches tall, thin to remove all but 1 or 2 sprouts per hill. Plants will not grow well or produce if overcrowded. Transplants are not recommended.

**Fertilize:** In the absence of a soil test, apply an all-purpose fertilizer (8-8-8 or 10-10-10) at planting, according to label directions. Reapply beside plants, 4 to 6 inches from the stem (side-dress), when vines begin to run.

**Insects/Diseases/Weeds:** Scout plants frequently for insect/disease damage. Use insecticidal soap (for soft-bodied insects) or Bt dust or spray (for caterpillars, or worms). Spray fungicide regularly to suppress common fungal diseases. Always follow label instructions. Mulch inhibits weeds and diseases.

**Harvest:** Harvest at 80 to 100 days, when the base of the fruit stem starts to separate. Harvest time varies depending on the variety.

**Other:** Avoid overwatering as fruits mature as this reduces fruit sugar content and flavor. Harvest at half-slip (when half the stem has separated from the fruit).

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