

New Vegetable Varieties for Alabama Home Gardens

► Every year, new vegetable varieties hit the market, and gardeners often wonder, *Which grows best in Alabama?* To help answer this question, home gardeners across the state have been trialing these varieties. Alabama Extension conducted four trials in 2025. Each trial consisted of two varieties. Each participant was given enough seed for 10 feet of row for each variety (and replacement seed). Each trial had to be grown and treated the same way by the individual gardener.

These trials were evaluated on the following:

- Disease and insect pressure
- Overall plant health
- Days until harvest
- Most abundant harvest
- Personal notes on taste

About the Gardeners

Alabama Extension had 50 participants across 15 counties, stretching from north to south Alabama. Together, they completed 230 trials, giving a snapshot of which varieties grow best in our state. Most gardeners were experienced, with more than five years of vegetable-growing know-how, and the majority grew in raised beds, followed by traditional in-soil gardens, containers, and a few in hoop houses.

Twenty percent of the gardeners fertilized their plants organically, and 75 percent conducted a soil test before planting.

Challenges

The 2025 growing season started with unfavorable weather conditions. Alabama experienced a cool, wet spring with snow and rain in some areas and temperatures dipping as low as 46 degrees F early in the season. While forecasts predicted warmer-than-normal conditions, reality was mixed—southern Alabama warmed up sooner, allowing basil, zinnia, and okra trials to start early, while northern regions lagged behind.

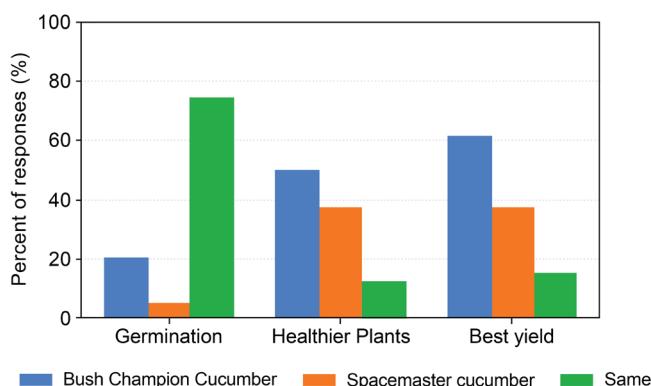
These fluctuations led to replanting in some trials, showing the adaptability of Alabama gardeners as well as the varieties.

Following is a recap of what gardeners discovered during the trials.



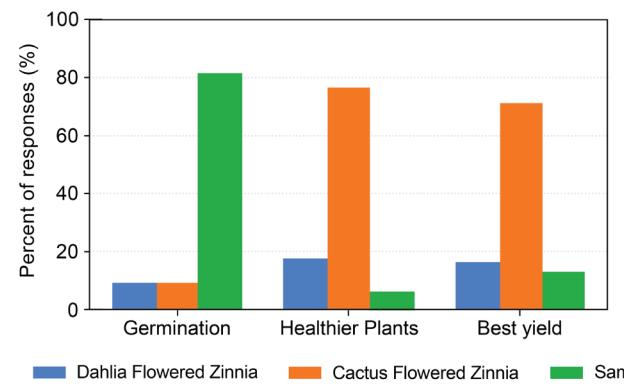
Cucumber Showdown

- Bush Champion stole the show with healthier plants and top yields.
- Germination? Pretty even—most gardeners said no significant difference.
- The yield of Bush Champion cucumber across the state was statistically significant and may be a new favorite in the garden.



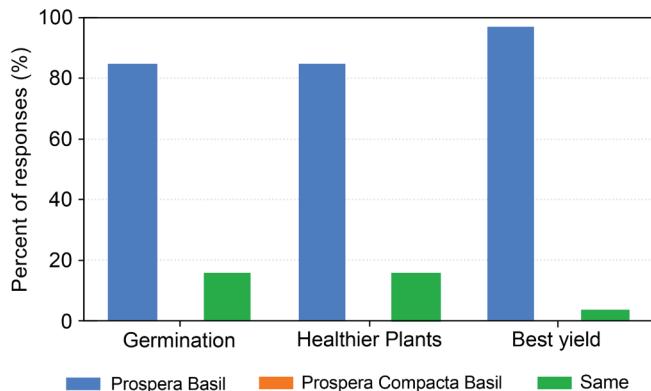
Zinnia Challenge

- Cactus Flowered zinnia dazzled with vibrant blooms and strong plants.
- Germination was a tie—both varieties sprouted well.
- Both are beautifully performing zinnias.



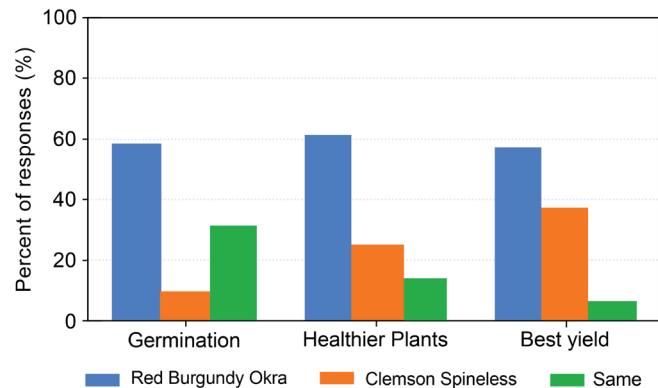
Basil Battle

- Prospera basil crushed the competition in every category—germination, health, and yield.
- Its rival barely made a mark—Prospera was the clear favorite and overall significant winner over its counterpart, Prospera Compacta basil.



Okra Contest

- Red Burgundy okra edged out Clemson Spineless in all metrics.
- Gardeners loved its germination and yield; Clemson put up a modest fight.
- Overall, there was not enough significant difference to claim an overall winner.



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