



## Melon Planting Guide

### About Melons

Melons offer a sweet, edible, and fleshy fruit inside their pumpkin-like rinds. Cantelopes are pleasantly fragrant, ranging in color from salmon to green, while honeydew melons are best known for their pale green color, and watermelons ranging from yellow to red.

### When to Plant

Planting directly in the garden should be done no earlier than 2-4 weeks after the last spring frost. If starting indoors, start them 2-6 weeks before transplanting.

### Where to Plant

Choose the sunniest spot possible as melons require a long growing season of full sun exposure. Melons prefer loose, moisture retentive, but well-drained soil. Get a head start by planting seeds indoors in 4" peat pots or if sowing directly in the garden, sow 6 seeds per 6-8" high, flat topped mound. Use a trellis if gardening with limited space. Keep in mind that melon roots can extend 10" to several feet into the earth and will need adequate space accordingly.

### How to Plant

Sow several seeds 1/2" deep in each pot and bring the soil temperature to 75 degrees F by placing them in a south-facing window or providing bottom heat. Harden off your seedlings prior to planting outside. If starting outdoors, loosen soil down to 12" and work in 2-3" of compost and sow seeds 1" deep with hills 3-5' apart.

### Caring for Melons

Apply several inches of organic mulch just as the vines begin to elongate. This covering will suppress weeds and help keep the fruits clean and disease free. Provide generous amounts of water, particularly right after transplanting and as the fruits develop. While melon plants are growing, blooming, and setting fruit, they need 1-2" of water per week. Water in the morning, and avoid wetting the leaves. Reduce watering as melons approach maturity to harvest. Most melons naturally separate from the vine when ripe, which means you can pick your melons with just a gentle tug. You can often judge the ripeness of cantaloupes and muskmelons by scent alone. Keep melons at room temperature for 2-3 days after harvesting to help bring out more natural flavors. After that, move them to the refrigerator.