

Melon growing. How to plant, grow and plant. 1/2

Being an important nutritious crop, melon is highly grown on large scale. However, the management practices have not been fully done by the farmers which lowers its quality and quantity.

Melon is a vegetable that belongs to cucurbitaceae family and is scientifically known as *cucumis melo* L. It is a herbaceous creeping plant made up of young shoots with thorns that grow up from leaf axils. It possesses an abundant root system which branches out and grow rapidly.

Crop management

As stalks climb and branch out, they are covered with nodes where leaves, thorns and flowers develop from and also leaves grow from main stem where secondary buds are found which turn into tertiary shoots where female fruit berry flowers are formed.

Additionally, leaves petiolated, alternate, covered with hairy down with 3-7 leaf lobes. Leaf edges are serrated in an enabling pronounced way and flowers are yellow in colour, singular from leaf sheath axils. These may be male, female or hamophrodite depending on appearance, crop and interaction of temperatures and light together with fertilizer applied.

Male flowers are seen on main shoots 10-15 days after planting and appear throughout the whole growth cycle while female flowers appear 10 days after male flowers on 2nd and 3rd generation of shoots. The fruit is simple, fleshy and indehiscent growing from interior ovary with central cavity.

Furthermore, fruit shape varies hence round or oval. The round is green, yellow, orange or white with smooth or rough

stripes. When ripe, it is soft, white or orange in colour and seeds are white or yellowish cream , oval and flat, elongated and regular in shape.

The crop requires an average temperature of 18-26 degrees centigrade to grow with an optimum humidity of 60-70% during flowering and fruit ripening. In regard to soil humidity, the crop is demanding for lead development and fruit ripening. However, excessive humidity causes problems with germination and once plants begin to grow, the result will be checked with as well as taste of fruit lack its sweetness.

Finally, melon requires well drained, fertilized sandy – clay soils with pH of 5.5-7.2.