



Tips for Growing Cantaloupe That's So Juicy It's Worth the Effort

Sweet, juicy cantaloupe can be yours with the right combination of sun, soil, and—something that's a little hard to control—pollination.

By **Deb Wiley** | Updated on May 31, 2023





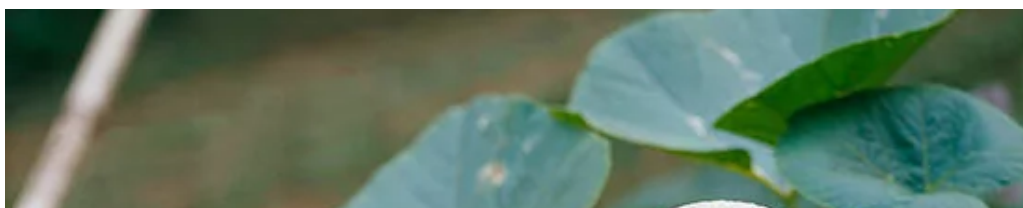
Nothing says summer like an endless bounty of fresh fruit. Colorful and bright, growing cantaloupe is the perfect addition to an edible garden. This sweet member of the [melon family](#) can be produced at home with some tender care and a little luck. These techniques will get you started.



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The Basics of Growing Cantaloupe





Plant cantaloupe seeds in full sun in well-drained soil. They'll need about 85 days to mature, but don't rush things. [Sow seeds](#) only when temperatures reliably stay above 50°F to 60°F. Plant in groups of two or three seeds spaced 2 feet apart. Once the seedlings emerge, keep only the most robust individual plant in each group, pulling the rest.

You can start the seeds in pots indoors several weeks before your [last frost date](#), but melons are particularly sensitive to root disturbance, so the vine growth might be stunted if you're not careful when transplanting them outdoors.

[Pull weeds as soon as you see them](#), making sure not to dislodge the cantaloupe seedlings or vines.

Growing [cantaloupes](#) need about 1 to 2 inches of [water per week](#). If you don't receive that much rain weekly, water deeply, but infrequently, to reach that amount. As fruits mature, gradually reduce and stop watering since too much moisture can cause the rinds to split. Too much water can also dilute the melon's sugar content.



Pollination and Growing Cantaloupe



One of the hardest parts about growing cantaloupes is that they may flower but fail to produce fruit. [Pollination](#) problems can come from several situations:

Cantaloupe produces separate male and female flowers and some with both male and female parts. The first flowers to appear are male and will fall off. For female flowers to set fruit, [bees must carry pollen](#) during the short window of time when pollination can occur. If you don't have enough bees in your yard, this can affect pollination.

Fruit set can also be affected if too much [nitrogen fertilizer](#) has been applied.

In the heat of summer, vines often produce only male flowers, which don't produce fruit.

Vines are too crowded.

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How to Tell When a Growing Cantaloupe Is Ripe





Cantaloupes ripen 35 to 45 days after pollination, depending on weather conditions. After that, the skin turns from green to creamy yellow-beige, the surface "netting" becomes rough, and the tendrils near the fruit turn brown and dry.

Experts advise you not to wait for the [fruit to fall off the vine](#). Instead, watch for signs it's ready to be harvested, then gently twist the fruit from the stem. It should slip away easily. If not, stop and let it ripen for another few days. Cantaloupes do not ripen once they are removed from the vine.

Grocery store cantaloupes that still have little stems attached were [harvested too early](#) and probably won't be very sweet.

Cantaloupes can be stored at 45° to 50°F for about one to two weeks.

Is It a Cantaloupe or a Muskmelon?





The word cantaloupe refers to two types of [muskmelons](#): the one most commonly grown in North America and a European cantaloupe with light green skin. Not all muskmelons are cantaloupes.

RELATED: [How to Grow Watermelon That's Sweet and Juicy This Summer](#)

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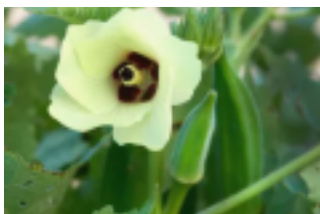
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