Watermelon Cultivar Trial - 2003

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The 2003 watermelon cultivar trial evaluated eight seeded (diploid) and eleven seedless (triploid) cultivars for Midwest production potential. The trial was grown on black plastic mulch with drip irrigation. Transplants were set in the field on May 14 and after some initially cool weather generally good growing conditions prevailed. Warm sunny days and nights with mild temperatures during fruit development resulted in exceptionally good quality fruit with firm flesh and high soluble solids readings (Table 1). Harvest occurred from July 22 through August 19. Table 1 reports marketable yield only - fruit that had good shape, color and a firm full sound when thumped. Number of fruit per acre and CWT/Acre were calculated from a conversion factor based on 2,300 plants per acre. At least ten marketable fruit of each cultivar were cut open to evaluate internal quality and to obtain % soluble solids (sweetness) readings. *Jade Star, Yellow Doll* and *Celebration* were the first seeded cultivars to bear ripe fruit while *Imagination, Gypsy* and *Sweet Delight* were the earliest seedless.

2003 Best Performers

Seedless: *#7167, Revolution, Freedom, Palomar, Seedless Sangria, Sun Ray, Gypsy.*

Seeded: *Stars n' Stripes, #820, Celebration.*

Materials and Methods

Planting: Planted in greenhouse, one seed per cell, 72 cell-pack, April 17, 2003. Transplanted to the field May 14.

Plot Design: RCB, 3 reps. Plot = 1 row of 6 hills 28" apart, rows 7' apart.

Culture: Loamy sand soil type. Watermelons grown using plasticulture system. Fertilizer applied preplant incorporated under plastic mulch and through trickle tubes during growing season. Rates determined by soil and plant tests.

Pesticides: Curbit, Poast herbicide; Capture, Furadan 4F, Sevin XLR insecticide; Bravo 720, Quadris fungicide.