

## Seedless Watermelon Cultivar Trials for Southwestern Indiana, 2003

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Seedless watermelons continue to generate both grower and consumer excitement, and in many urban markets around the US the percentage of seedless melons purchased has risen considerably. Indiana remains a strong producer of seedless (triploid) watermelons, and since 1994, we have conducted extensive annual variety trials for seedless varieties. This trial, along with the seeded (diploid) watermelon variety trial provides an objective and independent comparative assessment of new watermelons for the commercial industry. This year's study included 24 seedless watermelons, including two yellow fleshed types and one orange fleshed variety.

### Methods:

Seeds of 24 seedless watermelon cultivars were sown in the greenhouse on April 18 and transplanted on May 15 into a randomized complete block design with three replications. Charleston Elite was used as a pollinator and planted in every third row and in the guard rows. Plots were single rows 55 ft. long, centered eight ft. apart, and covered with 4 ft. black plastic mulch. Each plot had 11 plants five feet apart. The recommendations in the Midwest Vegetable Production Guide for Commercial Growers (ID-56, 2002) were followed for fertilization, weed, disease and insect control. Plots were harvested on August 6, 13, 19, and 27. The data was analyzed using the Statistical Analysis Software (SAS) package (SAS Institute, Cary, NC). Trickle irrigation was used as necessary to provide ample water to the field plots.

### Results and Conclusions:

Yields and Quality. Yields ranged from 24.7 to 37.9 tons/acre with 2673 to 5000 fruit/acre harvested across all entries (Table 1). The average weight of seedless fruit was down this year to 16.0 lbs/fruit with a range of 12.1 to 21.5 lbs/fruit. Smaller weight per fruit led to the higher number of fruit per acre in general. Highest yielding in this trial were: SR 8021, Trillion, Tri-X Palomar, AfternoonDelight, and 7167. Most of the fruit in the trial this year were oval and medium sized. Notable melon varieties exhibiting high soluble solids include Butterball, 7167, and Amarillo. This year two yellow fleshed varieties, Butterball and Amarillo, and one orange fleshed watermelon, Sunny, were submitted. Seedless watermelons should be a part of your melon production strategy as long as you have a market that will purchase the fruit at a higher price than the seeded watermelons.