

Watermelon

Citrullus lanatus · Cucurbit family

DIFFICULTY Moderate
TYPE Annual, warm-season trailing vine
MATURITY 12–16 weeks



SUN
Full sun



WATER
Deep and regular, eased off near ripening



SOIL PH
6.0–6.8



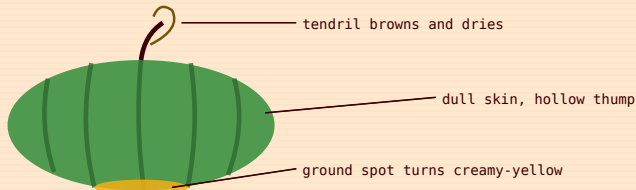
SPACING
1m apart, 2m between rows



DEPTH
2–3cm

01 Is it ripe?

There is no single perfect test, so use several together. The tendril nearest the fruit dries and browns, the pale ground spot turns creamy-yellow, and the skin loses its shine.



02 Planting

METHOD	Sow 2–3 seeds per mound into warm soil and thin to the strongest. In cooler areas start seed in pots 3–4 weeks early and transplant gently.
SOIL	Light, sandy, well-drained loam with compost. Raised mounds warm faster.
TIMING	Sow once soil is above 18°C — September to December in most zones, from August in the subtropics.
SPACE	Vines run 3m+, so allow about 2 m² per plant. Small “icebox” types suit tight plots.

Planting timing varies significantly by Australian climate zone. Set your zone above (or use the Find My Climate Zone tool) for guidance tailored to your own area.

03 Growing care

- Water deeply at the base once or twice a week; ease off as fruit ripens for sweeter flesh.
- Mulch under the vines to keep fruit clean, hold moisture and suppress weeds.
- Feed with compost at planting, then a potassium-rich feed such as comfrey tea once fruit has set.
- Hand-pollinate in the morning if bees are scarce: dab pollen from a male flower onto a female one.

04 Problems

- **Powdery mildew** — white powdery patches on leaves in humid weather; water at soil level and give vines room for airflow.
- **Fusarium wilt** — vines wilt and die from the crown while the soil stays moist; rotate crops and avoid replanting cucurbits in the same bed.
- **Poor fruit set** — flowers drop without fruiting in cool or wet weather or when bees are scarce; hand-pollinate.
- **Fruit flies** — sting young fruit and spoil it from inside; net or bag small fruit and clear fallen produce.

05 Harvest & storage

SIGNS	Tendril nearest the fruit browns and dries, ground spot turns creamy-yellow, skin dulls, and a tap sounds hollow.
METHOD	Cut the stem with a sharp knife, leaving a few centimetres attached. Handle gently — it bruises.
CURING	None needed; watermelon does not ripen further after picking.
STORAGE	Whole: 1–2 weeks, cool and shady. Cut: 3–4 days in the fridge, wrapped. Cubes freeze for smoothies.
PRESERVING	See Dehydrating (drying watermelon pieces as a chewy snack) for ways to keep a harvest surplus.

06 Companions & rotation

PLANT NEARBY

Corn

Nasturtium

Marigold

AVOID NEARBY

Potato

ROTATION NOTE

Avoid following any cucurbit for 3–4 years to limit wilt and mildew.