

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

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.

When growing melon, sowing need to be done in seedbeds due to the limitation of soil temperatures and in this, transplanting is done in 6-7 weeks after sowing when fruit leaf is fully developed. However, it is ideal for 2 leaves to be found and 3rd or 4th leaf to be showing.

Management practices

During planting, holes are made, seedlings are inserted and roots are covered with soil and watered to facilitate the root taking process. Mulching is carried out to increase soil temperature, diminish evaporation, reduce weed formation and increase fruit quality as it avoids direct contact with soil. This consists of covering soil with black polythene sheet.

Similarly, after planting, plastic tunnels are set in place to increase temperature levels. Thermo heating method is also used to increase temperature, improve on ventilation and prevents problems with drip irrigation. Use of stripes of plastic or cover made of perforated transfer film increases green house temperatures.

Furthermore, Stake plants to produce high quality crop and with regard to climbing crops, space at 1.75-1 plant per sqm and 1.5-2 crop/sqm for staked crops. Pruning stimulate growth of branches and increases early growth and favours control of quality and fruit size.

Irrigation method recommended is drip irrigation as melon is

sensitive to water logging. Pollination is done by bees by placing bee hives in field a few days before female flowers appears and after first male flowers emerge.

Additionally, flowering occur in stages in order to make way for 3-4 crops to fruit. Flowers remain open for 2-33 days as they open in morning and close in the evening. It takes 100-120 days from beginning of plant growth to beginning of harvesting. This causes fruit stating to vary between 30-50 days depending on crop and growing environment.

Finally, the fruit is not harvested until it is fully mature and harvesting is done by cutting using hand. Frequency of harvesting varies from 2-3 times per week during warm wheather or once during cold wheather.