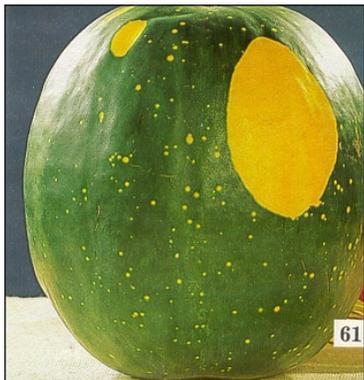


Heirloom Vegetables



Moon and Stars watermelon

One of the most asked for tomato varieties at plant seed and supply businesses is the Brandywine. Brandywine tomatoes are one of several heirloom varieties.

What does heirloom mean? Some consider heirloom seeds as having been passed down from generation to generation, while others feel it is any vegetable or flower seed that has been grown in an area for a long time. Certainly, all heirlooms are open-pollinated, which means they are pollinated by insects, wind or other natural ways. The seeds harvested from these plants will grow a new generation of the plant. How the male pollen is dropped or blown into the flower is usually unknown. Therefore, the offspring characteristics (taste, shape, height, color, etc.) and genetics may be very different from the original plant. This can be controlled by planting varieties distances apart

(depending on the crop, distance apart may have to be ten or even several hundred feet between varieties). In a small garden, just grow one variety at a time.

So why should anyone bother to grow heirloom vegetables? One of the main reasons is taste of the past. We all remember the tomato sandwiches, corn-on-the-cob and vegetables tasting better at Grandma's. Heirloom varieties have been selected because of their tenderness, taste and adaptability to grow and tolerate the local weather and soils conditions. Furthermore, heirloom varieties are usually adapted to tolerate pests of the area.

Heirloom growers are not concerned with hybrid varieties that have been bred

to tolerate shipping and handling abuse, or that will grow in any part of the country. With hybrids, both parents are known and plants bred for specific characteristics.



Abraham Lincoln tomato



These are some common heirloom vegetable varieties:

- Christmas Bean, a pole lima bean-type, was popular in the early 1900's; it has a unique burgundy red and white colored bean.
- Snow on the Mountain pole lima bean, from the 1800's, has deep maroon and white colored beans.
- Black Valentine, a bush green string bean; it was available for sale before 1850.
- Fin de Bagnol, a French variety of green string bean, dates back to the 1800's.
- Greencrop/Kentucky Wonder stringless green bean was released in 1956.
- Topcrop, a stringless green bean, was released by the USDA in 1950.
- Detroit Dark red beet, a very popular garden beet today, available since 1892.
- Jenny Lind, a small sweet cantaloupe with lime-green flesh, available since 1846.
- Georgia Southern/Green collards; popular before 1880.
- Bloody Butcher ornamental corn has deep red ears; used as a decoration, sometimes ground into flour or cornmeal. In the U.S. since 1845.
- Country Gentleman is a shoe peg variety white sweet corn.
- Straight Eight, a dark green, eight-inch cucumber, was released in 1935.
- West Indian gherkin, a small round cucumber with burrs, dates back to early 1800's.
- Tennis-ball lettuce, the parent of Boston type Lettuces, grown since the late 1800's.
- Clemson Spineless okra, popular since 1939.
- Longhorn okra dates back to the 1880's.
- Dwarf Gray Sugar pod pea has sweet edible pods; dates back to the 1780's.
- Alaska pea, first offered in the U.S. in the 1880's; not a super sweet type.
- Little Marvel pea is tender and sweet; first sold in the U.S. around 1910.
- Hungarian sweet banana pepper was available in the late 1930's.
- Royal King sweet bell pepper was available in 1917; turns red from green in 79 days.
- Connecticut Field pumpkin, a Native American heirloom, was available before 1700.
- Bloomsdale spinach has dark green, wrinkled leaves; was released in 1847.
- Early Prolific Straight neck squash has a nice bright lemon yellow color; was popular in the late 1930's.
- Abraham Lincoln tomato was released in Illinois in 1923.
- Brandywine Red tomato, the most popular heirloom tomato, dates back to 1885; was named for the Brandywine Creek in Chester County, Pennsylvania.
- Greater Baltimore tomato was made available to the public in the early 1900's.
- Marglobe tomato was developed by the United States Department of Agriculture in 1917; wasn't released until 1925.
- Mortgage Lifter tomato was very popular in the 1930's.
- Rutgers tomato was introduced in 1934; still popular today.
- Moon and Stars watermelon has unique green rind with yellow specks (stars); was available in 1940.
- Mountain Sweet watermelon has dark green stripes on medium green rind; dates back to the 1800's.
- Black Beauty zucchini has very dark green colored flesh; available since 1958.

How do you obtain heirloom seeds? Some families have collected seeds from their heirloom plants and saves them each year for the next growing season. Recently, more and more companies advertise and sell heirloom seeds. Some of these companies are:

- **Heirloom Seeds**
P.O. Box 245
W. Elizabeth, PA 15088-0245
www.heirloomseeds.com
- **Seed Savers Exchange**
3094 North Winn Road
Decorah, Iowa 52101
www.seedsavers.org
- **Victory Seed Company**
P.O. Box 192
Molalla, Oregon 97038
www.victoryseeds.com
- **Seed Trust**
P.O. Box 596
Cornville, AZ 86325
www.seedtrust.com
- **TomatoFest**
P.O. Box W-1
Carmel, CA 93921
www.tomatofest.com
- **Tomato Growers Supply Company**
P.O. Box 60015
Fort Myers, FL 33906
www.tomatogrowers.com

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