

## GROWING THE IZU MELON IN THE TRI-CITIES

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This part of the Columbia Basin, along with the area around Hermiston, Oregon, has been widely recognized as an excellent area for growing good melons. On the whole, I think that the commercial growers produce some very nice melons, but I have often felt that the choices of varieties were too limited, and that there were some better tasting melons that would do well here. As a result, for about the past 15 years I have been experimenting with growing melons in my home garden, usually several varieties at once. One of the better melons I have found is a Japanese melon traditionally grown on the warm Izu peninsula south of Tokyo. The fruit, usually called the "Izu melon", is attractive and very tasty. It is of medium size, with green flesh and a coarsely netted pale tan skin. In Japan, they are often grown in greenhouses, one melon to a vine, to be used as special gifts. Those melons often reach a diameter of eight inches, but field-grown melons in this area, with three to six melons on a vine, seldom exceed six inches in diameter.

Although they thrive best under near-tropical conditions, like other melons, as long as they get off to a good start, they will perform very well here, even if the late summer weather becomes relatively cool, as it did this summer (2000).

Many of the various varieties of late-season melons we had this year did not completely mature, and flavors were very mild to almost tasteless. However, all of the Izu melons matured nicely, if a bit late, and flavors were excellent. We consider this melon to be very forgiving of neglect, unlike most of the others.

For those gardeners who would like to give the Izu melon a try in 2001, we can provide a limited number of seeds. Unfortunately, there is no commercial source of these seeds in this country, so we would prefer to pass along our seeds to seed savers who will help us to propagate this variety of melon here.