

The Green Scene

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Garden Q &A

What are some good muskmelon and watermelon varieties for Iowa?

Suggested muskmelon varieties for Iowa include ‘Earlisweet’ (early maturing, 2 to 3 lb. fruit), ‘Eclipse’ (round 6 to 8 lb. fruit), ‘Hale Best’ (oval 4 to 5 lb. fruit), ‘Aphrodite’ (oval 6 to 9 lb. fruit), ‘Superstar’ (oval 6 to 8 lb. fruit), ‘Ambrosia’ (round 4 to 5 lb. fruit), ‘Athena’ (oval 4 to 6 lb. fruit), ‘Earlidew’ (honeydew type, pale green flesh), and ‘Passport’ (hybrid melon, green flesh).

Excellent watermelon varieties include ‘Crimson Sweet’ (red-fleshed, seeded, blocky round fruit, 20 to 30 lb.), ‘Royal Sweet’ (red-fleshed, seeded, blocky oval fruit, 20 to 25 lb.), ‘Sangria’ (red-fleshed, seeded blocky oval fruit, 20 to 26 lb.), ‘Crunchy Red’ (red-fleshed, seedless, round to oval fruit, 15 to 18 lb.), ‘Gypsy’ (red-fleshed, seedless, round fruit, 13 to 17 lb.), ‘Millionaire’ (red-fleshed, seedless, oblong fruit, 13 to 20 lb.), ‘Sweet Beauty’ (red-fleshed, seeded, oblong icebox size fruit, 5 to 7 lb.), ‘Yellow Baby’ (yellow-fleshed, seeded, round fruit, 9 to 12 lb.), and ‘Amarillo’ (yellow-fleshed, seedless, round fruit, 12 to 14 lb.).

A seeded variety (pollinizer) must be planted with seedless watermelon varieties for proper pollination. Pollinator seeds are often included in seedless watermelon packets.

When can I plant peppers in my garden?

Peppers are a warm-season crop. Plant peppers in the garden after the danger of frost is past. In central Iowa, peppers can be planted in mid-May. Gardeners in southern Iowa can plant one week earlier, while those in northern counties should wait an extra week. The last practical date for planting peppers is approximately June 20.

Want more tips, tricks, and articles? Go to hortnews.extension.iastate.edu

Marion County

210 North Iowa St. Knoxville, IA 50138 | 641-842-2014

www.extension.iastate.edu/marion

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Avoid Oak Wilt by Cutting Out Pruning Now

By Zach Clemens, communications specialist; Lina Rodriguez Salamanca, Plant Pathologist

The warm temperatures last weekend has shortened the window to prune oak trees this year. Generally pruning oak trees from April to July exposes them to a high risk of contracting oak wilt, a serious disease that can infect and kill a range of oak species. Without a sustained cold streak soon, oak pruning is not recommended.

Oak wilt is caused by the fungus *Bretziella fagacearum* (previously *Ceratocystis fagacearum*). When oaks are pruned or wounded during the spring and summer, the risk of transmission by beetle vectors that carry spores to newly wounded trees becomes vary high.

As temperatures rise, beetles that transmit the fungus become active. Hot and rainy weather causes the fungus on already infected trees to form spores on fungal mats underneath the tree trunk's bark. The beetles are attracted to the sweet odor that the fungus mats produce; they pick up the fungus and then transmit the disease as they are also attracted to the sap that oaks produce when pruned. So, any maintenance pruning should be stopped now until August.

Scouting for fungal mats is important to do in early April and throughout the spring months. Look for cracks in the bark of oak trees, which is a sign of a fungal mat growing. These mats will emit a fruity smell, and if the bark peels easily, look for blackened, raised, fluffy areas on the sapwood. Have a scouting guide handy.

If you are not sure, or are considering testing for oak wilt, the Plant and Insect Diagnostic Clinic at Iowa State University Extension and Outreach can help. Make sure to send good quality digital photographs.

Read oaks are very susceptible to the oak wilt fungus and can die withing four to six weeks during the summer. Fungal mats will only form on read oaks (pointy leaves) in the spring. White and bur oak (lobed leaves) are moderately more tolerant, and therefore no fungal mats will be present. Refrain from pruning all healthy oaks starting now and though August to keep your community oak trees healthy and strong.



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