

## Watermelon: A Distinctive Fruit

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### Abstract

Watermelon (**Citrullus Lanatus**) is the major commercial crop in India. It is one of the most important fruits cultivated in the tropics. It is consumed throughout the world and it is mainly cultivated in the tropical countries. This study mainly focuses on Suitability for summer cultivation, lucrative earning to small farmers, nutritional value to health, uses of watermelons. Conclusion of this study is the demand for watermelon is getting increased year by year in the Indian market. One who cultivate the watermelon in the month of December (Karthigai pattam) they can get an assured profit. The cultivation of watermelon has also brought smiles on the faces of farmers.

**Keywords:** Lucrative earning, Nutritional value, Uses of watermelon, Watermelon.

### Introduction

Watermelon (**Citrullus Lanatus**) is a member of the cucurbit family (Cucurbitaceae) (Majid Namadari, 2011). It is one of the most important fruits cultivated in the tropics. It is consumed throughout the world and it is mainly cultivated in the tropical countries (Onyemauwa C.S. 2000). Its centre of origin has been traced to both the Kalahari and Sahara deserts in Africa (Jarret et al., 1996). China, turkey, Brazil, United States, Egypt and Russian Federation are the major watermelon producers. The world watermelon production has been growing over the years. During the year 2010, the global production of watermelon reached 7, 34, 90,835 metric tonnes (FAO 2010). Over the years, the area under cultivation and the volumes produced have been increasing in India. In 2011, India produced about 3, 53,500 metric tonnes in 26,500 hectares (Vigneshwara Varmudy 2012). More than 1200 varieties of watermelon grown worldwide (Zohary and Hopf, 2000) the global consumption of the crop is greater than that of any other cucurbit. It is one of the major commercial crops. It is referred to as to “the chief of the world’s luxuries and king over all fruit of earth” (USDA 1998). In South Carolina, watermelon is called the “Smile Fruit”, but it’s actually not a fruit. It is a vegetable like cucumber, squash, pumpkin and cantaloupe, the watermelon really a member of the gourd family. Therefore, horticulturist treat watermelons as ‘to be vegetables’. Watermelons are mainly cultivated in Maharashtra, Karnataka, Tamilnadu, Punjab,

Rajasthan, Madyapradesh and Uttar Pradesh. They are being grown in several places in Tamilnadu including Erode, Ariyalur, Tuticorin, Villupuram, Salem and Coimbatore.

### **Suitability for Summer Cultivation**

Watermelon is a warm seasonal crop. It is the most popular summer fruits in India. Watermelons and Indian summers are made for each other. Summer and Watermelon are inseparable. Watermelon is probably the most suitable crop for the summer cultivation. It is usually planted in the dry season when the soil is warm and frost free which mostly results to larger fruits of watermelon. Optimal crop growth if temperature is above 38°C. Optimum temperature for germination is 28-32°C. This crop has tolerated the warm of the sun. Watermelon not only tolerates hot weather but for best growth requires more heat than any other vegetables. It requires hot dry climate and plenty of sunshine. In rainy season it does not grow well but now a days it has been cultivating throughout the year. Continuous rainfall will reduce the sugar content in the fruit. When the temperature rises, the sugar content will also be increased. It is considered one of the best storable forms of 'cultivated water'. Even today some African countries cultivate watermelon for use as a drink. Day-by-day summer days have been increasing; demand of the watermelon is also increasing. We can find watermelon in our markets throughout the year, the season for watermelon is the summer when they are sweet and of the best quality.

### **Lucrative Earning to Small Farmers**

Watermelon is a short term crop. It gives good earning to farmers within 90 days. Even if it is done in small acreage, a farmer can earn a good profit. Watermelons are becoming a very important source of income for small scale farmers of the semi-arid tropics of West Africa (Fatondji, D 2008). Recent report indicated that exotic vegetables production generate higher profit, provide more employment and income to the farmers than those of indigenous vegetables, knowledge of availability of aggregated farm level resources and differences in their productivities are essential in order to enhance productive capacity of the smallholder farmers (Ajewole and Folayan, 2008). In southern Tamilnadu, this crop cultivation has been popular now-a-days because of its short duration seeking less labour and high profit. The crop is the major source of income and employment for rural household in the predominantly watermelon growing state of Tamilnadu where large number of farmers are involved in watermelon cultivation. A maximum of 20-25 tonnes of watermelons could be cultivated on one acre. Farmers should implement new technologies if they must succeed. Whether it is one acre or 100 acres, a farmer

must be willing to try new techniques and learn from past mistake. Farmers must become more aware about the marketing avenues for their crops. They should grow only those crops which have marketable qualities.

**Nutritional Value to Health**

- ✧ Watermelons have 92% water by weight. It is a thirst quencher in hot summer days. It is a nature’s gift to beat the scorching summer heat.
- ✧ It is an excellent fruit, which can work wonders for human skin. It acts as a natural moisturizer as well as a toner and keeps the skin cool, glowing and fresh.
- ✧ It has a good source of potassium; which helps in controlling blood pressure thereby ensuring the health of one’s heart.
- ✧ Watermelon also rich in lycopene an antioxidant it may help the body fight cancer and prevent disease. Studies have also shown that lycopene protects skin damage from UV rays and from prostate cancer.
- ✧ Watermelon is an excellent source of vitamin A; which helps to protect from lung and oral cavity cancer.
- ✧ Watermelons are very low in calories and fat, which considered an ideal diet food and is high in energy, making it a great energy boost.
- ✧ Watermelon contains high on calcium. It helps build up strong bones.
- ✧ It cleansing and natural diuretic properties help in curing kidney and bladder problems.

A 100 gm. of watermelon fruit contains the following nutrients.

<b>NUTRIENTS</b>	<b>NUTRITIONAL VALUE</b>
Water	91.45g
Carbohydrates	7.55g
Phosphorus	11mg
Magnesium	10mg
Potassium	112mg
Calcium	7mg
Iron	0.24mg
Sodium	1g
Folate	3mcg
Vitamin A	569 IU
Vitamin C	8.1mg
Calories	30.0 calories

**Source: USDA National Nutrient Database**

**Uses**

Watermelon is also used in many versatile preparations such as jelly, pie, mouses, salsa, sherbet, muffin, sauce, cake and sandwich.

✧ Watermelon rinds also edible and sometimes used as a vegetable. In china they are stir-fried, stewed or often pickled. When stir fried, the de-skinned and de-fruited rind is cooked with olive oil, garlic, chilly, peppers, scallions, sugar and rum.

✧ Every part of the fruit is edible. In some Asian countries roasted seeds are seasoned to make a snack or ground and made into bred. The seeds are a rich source of protein.

✧ Watermelon juice can also be made into wine. It is also commonly used to make a variety of salads, most notably fruit salad.

✧ They are used to make jams due to their high content of pectin.

✧ The utility of watermelon rises in the month of Ramzan. The juicy and succulent fruit is sought after those adhering to the code of fasting.

**Conclusion**

Summer succor, magic melon, quick quencher, miracle maker or ready refresher; hail it by any name, this heat-wave rider always gets a thunderous welcome. Watermelon is a staple food item in every household during summer days. When temperature is high, consumers demand greater amounts of fruit. Most of the consumers prefer watermelon rather than other fruits because of its delicious taste and crisp texture. The demand for watermelon is getting increased year by year in the Indian market. One who cultivate the watermelon in the month of December (Karthigai pattam) they can get an assured profit. The cultivation of watermelon has also brought smiles on the faces of farmers. Hence farmers urge to cultivate the watermelon.

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