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Cucumber Trial 2008

Nine Palms Ranch Trial, 2008

Lead: Carole Reek

Team members: Carol Halloran, Suna Herder, Nella Henninger, Helen Murray, Jeanie Sunseri, Sandra Tamm

Summary

Fourteen varieties of cucumbers were compared for flavor and production. Stallion White and Japanese Long ranked top in flavor. Marketmore 76 was top in production.

Overview

This was a trial to compare the production and taste of 14 varieties of cucumbers. The cucumbers were grown on a 35 foot long arbor. This arbor is 7 feet tall and 41/2 feet wide. The arbor is divided into 7 five foot sections on each side. 14 varieties of cucumbers were selected.

Soil preparation

Between May 16th and May 23rd the area around the arbor was cleared. Sweet peas were pulled up and the area was cleared of weeds, debris and sweet pea leavings. The area was watered well and spread with a heavy dressing of alfalfa pellets. The pellets were spread and dug in by hand on May 20th. On May 23rd, the area was dug in again and watered. The area was ready to plant.

Seeding and transplanting

On May 27th, after much discussion, we decided that cucumber seeds germinated easily so we would seed directly in the soil. In each of the 14 5-foot sections, we planted one type of cucumber seed. We planted on both sides of the wire in their section. Seven seeds were planted on each side, with the plan of thinning after they germinated. We alternated cucumbers with obvious differences. For example: a white cucumber next to a green cucumber, so as to tell them apart more easily as they started to produce. After the planting was finished, the area was toppedressed with about one inch of Garrods horse compost and the area was watered well.

By June 17th, only 29 of the 196 seeds planted had germinated. Between the planting on May 27th and June 17th, the area was well watered. It was determined that because of the cold soil and the birds, what seed was going to germinate had done so. We would seed in 6 packs and replant when the plants were ready.

We seeded in six-packs on June 17th and continued to hand water the few in the ground that had germinated. We covered the seedlings in the ground with strawberry baskets to protect them from the birds. We could determine no reason why one type of seed would germinate and one other type didn't. We concluded it was just the cold soil and the birds. By June 24th all seeds in the six-packs had germinated. On June 27th, we planted all of the plants except the Sweet Armenian and the Gherkin as they were too small. There was a hot spell and so we waited to plant those two until July 8th.

Except for the Armenian and the Gherkin, the plants just took off! After all plants were planted we had 8 plants of each type of cucumber and 2 plants of the Gherkin. The Gherkin did not germinate in the ground and only 2 germinated in pots. We continued to hand water on Tuesdays and Fridays along with the drip irrigation for 2 weeks until the plants were well established.



Finally, some growth!

Watering

The arbor throughout the trial was watered using an automatic drip system for 45 minutes on Mondays, Thursdays and Sundays. We also hand watered on Tuesdays and Fridays after the seeds were planted until they germinated.

Fertilization and Pesticides

No fertilizer other than the initial alfalfa pellets were used. No pesticides were used.

Harvesting and tasting

Variety	Description	Total number harvested	Total weight harvested	Seed source
Armenian	Pale green ridged fruits.	0	0	Renee's Garden Seed
Boothbys Blond	High yielding plants with 6" to 8" cream colored cucumbers that are mild and thin skinned.	120	50 lb 8 oz	Baker Creek Heirloom Seed
Chelsea Prize	This is the kind we see shrink wrapped in the grocery store. Vigorous grower. Delicious.	83	63 lb 13 oz	Renee's Garden Seed

Garden Oasis	A sweet burpless cucumber.	100	27 lb 4 oz	Renee's Garden Seed
Japanese Climbing	Good variety for climbing. Fruits are 7-9" long by 3" in diameter. Good for slicing.	59	31 lb 6 oz	Seed Savers Exchange
Japanese Long	Long slim fruit. Crisp and mild. Firm flesh with few seeds.	60	41 lb 6 oz	Baker Creek Heirloom Seeds
Lemon	This favorite just kept on producing. Good flavor, but the hardest of all to train up the arbor.	120	26 lb 1 oz	Renee's Garden Seeds
Marketmore 76	Dark green 8 to 9 inch long 2 to 2 1/2" in diameter. This cucumber just kept producing and producing. It just would have kept going, but we had to pull the vines for the next trial.	148	72 lb 5 oz	Peaceful Valley Farms
Mexican Sour Gherkin	Novelty cucumber. This seed was planted as we had only 13 varieties of seed when we started planting. Mike Kent was kind enough to donate this seed. Unfortunately it didn't produce one cucumber.	0	0	Territorial Seed
Pearl Hybrid	6' to 7' long pale green and ivory fruit. Vigorous grower and producer.	115	44 lb 7 oz	Park Seed
Persian Baby Green Fingers	Prolific! Nice flavor. 3 to 5 inches long.	180	46 lbs	Renee's Garden Seeds
Stallion White Cucumber	White with a hint of pale green. Burpless, 6 to 8 inches long. Crisp and sweet. Very good flavor. High yielding. The favorite.	65	41 lb 5 oz	New Dimension Seed
White Wonder	Fruits are 7" long by 2 1/2" in diameter.	72	24 lb	Seed Savers Exchange
Yamamoto Extra Long	Extra long fruit that can grow to 24". The skin is green with yellow stripes. Sweet, crisp and burpless.	53	26 lb 6 oz	Baker Creek Heirloom Seed

Conclusion

Tastings were held throughout the trial. The first on July 29th. The cucumber that rated number one was, STALLION WHITE. It continued to be number one throughout the trial. It was the best of the white cucumbers.



The winner, Stallion White!

Japanese Climbing was the best of the green cucumbers. Pearl Hybrid and White Wonder were the least favorite in all tastings. As in all tastings the opinion is across the board, as everyone's taste buds are different. We would like to trial the Armenian cucumber again. Ten cucumbers would do better on the arbor, 14 were too many for the space. Nine Palms is only open to Master Gardeners on Tuesdays and Fridays. Cucumbers, like green beans really need to be picked everyday. Twice a week picking meant some cucumbers were picked past their ideal picking size. After a few stumbles in the beginning, we think this trial was a success.

I would like to thank the many Master Gardeners at Nine Palms. They always pitched in, whenever needed. Betsy Fischer and Mike Kent helped with the drip irrigation system in the beginning and others were always on hand to help tuck the vines and pick.

Carole Reek



Nine Palms Open House on August 22, 2008

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