



President's Message
Don Hiller - JLW Produce
April 2004

I would like to thank everyone that came to the 2004 NC Watermelon Association Annual Convention in Wilmington, NC. The 2004 Convention was a great success. We had an informative and educational grower's program that did result in an increase in attendance over last year. Our goal will be to attract even more growers to future meetings. Thanks to Bonnie Holloman, Cathy Price, Gloria Richardson, Dr. Jonathan Schultheis, Allan Thornton and Anne Meares for all the preparations for this successful Convention.

Representatives from Food Lion, Ingles, Harris Teeter and Wal-Mart attended the 2004 Convention. This was the best ever participation from the chain stores. Their generosity in support of this auction made it a success! Please patronize these chain stores by purchasing North Carolina watermelons this summer. While shopping in these stores you will have the opportunity to meet our 2004 NCWA Queen as she promotes our product. Many thanks to all that donated and bought auction items and bought items.

The NCWA invites all comments and suggestions toward helping us recruit more growers into the NCWA family. Being a part of the NCWA benefits both the Association and the grower.

In closing, I hope you have the best summer ever for North Carolina Watermelons.

Executive Director's Report
Bonnie Holloman

NCWA Grower \$\$\$ Work to Advance Research and Extension Projects and Marketing in North Carolina

As part of its mission, the North Carolina Watermelon Association sets aside funds to supplement research and extension projects at North Carolina State University that will benefit watermelon growers today and in coming years. The NCWA also supports a strong

marketing program in cooperation with the North Carolina Department of Agriculture & Consumer Services Marketing Division. (See Michael Smith's report for 2004 Marketing projects) Monies used to fund these projects were derived from the proceeds of the 2004 NC Watermelon Association auction. Without the support of those who buy the auction items and the chain store buyers, funding of these projects would not be possible.

Research & Extension Projects Funded for 2004

Reducing Sandea Injury in Seedless, Seeded and Pollinizer Watermelon - Allan Thornton, K. Jennings, Drs. Jonathan Schultheis, David Monks

Evaluation of Fungicides and Disease Forecasting for Control of Watermelon Gummy Stem Blight - Dr. Gerald Holmes and Allan Thornton

Insect Monitoring, Early Season Insect Control with Seed Treatments and Watermelon Mite Management - K. Sorensen

Promotions Coordinator Report
Anne Meares

As Queen Tracy's reign came to a close, we traveled to the 32nd Annual South Carolina Watermelon Convention. Thanks to Mary Beth Hiers and the South Carolina Watermelon Association for inviting us to attend and giving us such a warm welcome. We had a great time and enjoyed meeting and socializing with everyone at the convention. As you all know we love spending time together, because we are, "The Carolina Girls."

Next, we were off to the 90th National Watermelon Association Convention in Las Vegas the week of February 22nd. We would like to thank all the sponsors for making Nationals so enjoyable and successful. We really had a wonderful time. I hope everyone returned safely home with their winnings from the casino!

Queen Tracy represented North Carolina very well in the National Watermelon Queen Pageant and we were extremely proud of her.

On behalf of the entire North Carolina Watermelon Association and myself, I would like to take this opportunity to thank Miss Tracy Register for her hard work and dedication during the past year. Tracy, you were a great representative and we will treasure your friendship forever. Thank you!

Last but not least, I would again like to thank Michael Smith, NCDA&CS Marketing Specialist, for assisting Queen Tracy and myself on most of our promotions.

I will introduce you to the 2004 North Carolina Watermelon Queen and give you the details of the Annual North Carolina Watermelon Association Convention in the next issue.

NCDA&CS Marketing Specialist Michael Smith

I hope that everyone enjoyed the 2004 NCWA Convention. It was good to see such great attendance. A special thank you to all chain store representatives and individuals who made the 2004 Auction such a success. Because of their generosity, I give you the following as our 2004 Marketing Program.

The NCWA in cooperation with the NC Department of Agriculture & Consumer Services, Division of Marketing will conduct a variety of marketing promotions during 2004. The goals of these promotions will be to increase awareness and demand for NC watermelons among consumers, to increase buyer awareness of NC watermelons availability, and provide incentives to buyers to purchase NC watermelons. The following promotions will include.

Media: Advertising spots on UNC-TV during the following times: Sunday afternoon at 5 p.m. "Cooking with Bert Wolfe." Saturday afternoon at 3 p.m. "Barbeque with Steve Raichlen." These 15 second spots will air before and after the shows beginning April 17-June 2004.

Billboards- 9 to 10 billboards promoting NC watermelons from Durham, NC to the East coast.

Bus Advertisements - advertisements will be placed on city buses across the state promoting NC watermelons.

Durham Bull Games: NCWA will participate in watermelon promotions at three Durham Bull Games.

NC Fruit & Shipper Directory: This directory was compiled to be used as a source for produce buyers to easily locate NC wholesale growers and shippers. Directories will be mailed to buyers on the East Coast.

Radio Promotions: Will promote NC watermelons on 5 stations across the state.

Food Service Promotions: Food service promotions will be conducted with (K&W and K&S, Golden Corral) cafeteria chains to promote NC watermelons. Table tent signs and posters will be used in these restaurants.

Direct Market POS materials: "Fresh from NC Farms" posters and price cards will be provided to farmers selling produce direct to consumers at farmers markets and roadside stands across the state.

Trade Shows: NCWA will participate in the 2004 PMA Show as well as the North Carolina State Fair.

Back to School: Updated brochures and posters will be printed for the Back to School Project.

July is Watermelon Promotion Month: We will ask Governor Easley to proclaim July 2005 as NC Watermelon month in North Carolina. Press releases on this event will be included in a media kit.

Allan Thornton Becomes Extension Liaison to NC Watermelon Association

Welcome Allan to the North Carolina watermelon family! Allan Thornton joined the horticultural science department as an Extension Associate in February 2004. He received his B.S. degree in Agronomy and his M.S. degree in Crop Science from North Carolina State University. He worked five years as a Research Technician in the Crop Science Department at North Carolina State University. Allan then joined North Carolina Cooperative Extension in 1993 as a horticulture agent in Johnston County. In 1994, he became the horticulture agent in Sampson County and remained there until he assumed his present position. Allan will be assuming extension responsibilities for watermelon. He will also share extension responsibilities with Doug Sanders for pepper. Allan will work closely with producers of major vegetable and fruit crops for Sampson and surrounding counties.

Potential Opportunities with Mini Watermelons

Jonathan R. Schultheis¹, Bill Jester², Brad Thompson¹, and Brad Taylor². Department of Horticultural Science, North Carolina State University, ¹Raleigh, NC 27695-7609 and ²Cunningham Research Station, 200 Cunningham Rd., Kinston, NC 27501

Introduction: The majority market share once held by red-flesh, seeded watermelon prior to 2000 has been replaced by red-flesh seedless watermelons. Although red-flesh seedless watermelons now hold the majority of the market share, there are some recent developments with the introduction of seedless mini watermelons (also called personal size watermelons/palm melons) which may redefine the fruit size the consumer typically purchases in the market place. Because the mini watermelon is so new, the market is currently defining itself. However, the mini watermelon size range currently required ranges from 3 to 7 pounds with 4

to 6 pounds being the most preferred size range. The reason for this size range is that these are the sizes that can most readily be packed that fit into the boxes in which the fruit are sold.

Methods: Before the growing season, seed companies are contacted to obtain seed for a variety of watermelons that fit various categories (orange/yellow flesh; diploid red flesh; triploid red flesh; or miniature size). Seed companies donate seeds in all cases as they are interested in their cultivar and product lines and how they grow and produce in the southeastern United States, and if they have market potential. The first year of mini watermelon evaluations was this past growing season, 2003.

Once all seed were obtained, they were planted into LE 1803 transplant trays (Landmark Plastics Corp.; Akron, OH) in early April. The planting medium used was Fafard 4P, a commercial soilless mix (Conrad Fafard, Inc.; Agawam, ME). Approximately 6 weeks after seeding, the plants were established in the field. Fertilizer was incorporated prior to the laying of black polyethylene plastic (1.25 mil thick; NC Plastic Products, Morganton, NC). Fumigant was injected at the time the plastic was layed with Telone C-17 used for watermelon production. Spacing between row middles was 10 feet and in-row spacing was 1.5 feet. Plots contained 10 plants and there were 3 replications. At time of transplant, a starter solution was applied using 20-20-20 (1 lb/50 gallons water) and Diazinon (3 oz/50 gallons water) for insect control. Plots with missing plots were replanted approximately 7 days after planting to achieve nearly 100% stand in most cases. Trickle irrigation was utilized (T-tape, 8 mil, 12 inch spacing, 0.34 gph; T-Systems International, Inc. San Diego, California) over the growing season. Fertigation was initiated one week after planting and applied weekly. Fertilizer rates were applied according to watermelon crop recommendations (Sanders et al., 2003). Likewise, pesticides were typically applied weekly as a preventative measure beginning about two to three weeks after transplanting (North Carolina Cooperative Extension Service, 2000-2003).

Two harvests were made and evaluations of each watermelon entry included yield, production earliness, soluble solids using a hand held refractometer, fruit shape and size, exterior and interior descriptions, and disease susceptibility/tolerance.

Results: Yield on a number per acre basis for various weight categories are presented in table 1. Based on marketable yields being melons weighing 4 to 7 pounds, marketable yields for cultivars ranged between 73 to 3485 fruit per acre. Obviously, some melon cultivars did not fit the mini watermelon classification. This was the case with Demi Sweet, DPS 02-31, HA-5104, HA-5132, and ZG-8907. Some of the cultivars with the highest marketable yields were Petite Perfection, Precious Petite, and RWT 8149 from Syngenta Seed. Corresponding percentages of fruit that yielded in

each of the weight categories are presented in table 2. Only the Syngenta cultivars or line had at least 50% of fruit which were marketable. Some of the lines or cultivars that show promise if fruit size can be reduced through cultural management practices are HA-5130, HA-5133, HA-6007, and SR 8103 (Betsy) . Collaborative tests are being done in 2004 throughout the southeastern United States to assess the effects of in-row spacing on melon size and production. In addition, 28 new lines or cultivars are being evaluated in 2004. Locations include Bradenton, FL; Edisto, SC; Charleston, SC; Quincy, FL; and Kinston, NC. If you are in one of these areas this summer, please stop by so you can make your own assessments.

Acknowledgements: We are grateful to the various seed companies for their donation of seeds for the various advanced lines and cultivars. We also thank the Golden Leaf Foundation for their financial support of the NC Specialty Crops program which funded the research for the mini watermelon evaluation test in 2003.

References: College of Agricultural and Life Sciences. 2000-2003. The 2000 (2001, 2002, 2003) North Carolina agricultural chemical manual. North Carolina State Univ., Raleigh.

Sanders, D.C. et al., 2003. Vegetable crop guidelines for the southeastern U.S. 2003-2004. North Carolina Vegetable Growers Association. 205 pp.

***Mark Your Calendar
2005 NCWA Convention
March 11-12, 2005,
Marriott Crabtree Valley
Raleigh, North Carolina***

Table 2. Personal Size Triploid **watermelon hybrid cultivar trial**. Percentage harvested by number within each weight category over 2 harvests. Kinston, N.C., 2003.

Cultivar	Company	Fruit Size Category (lb)						
		<3	3-3.9	4.0-7.0	7.1-8.0	8.1-9.0	9.1-10	>10
Demi Sweet Siegers		1	1	13	1	7	12	63
DPS 02-31	D. Palmer	0	0	2	2	3	5	89
Extazy	Hazera	2	1	19	19	14	14	31
HA-5104	Hazera	0	0	6	2	8	13	70
HA-5109	Hazera	2	2	28	16	12	20	20
HA-5116	Hazera	0	3	15	21	20	12	29
HA-5130	Hazera	0	0	33	26	23	10	7
HA-5132	Hazera	0	1	7	3	8	9	71
HA-5133	Hazera	2	3	36	13	13	11	21
HA-6007	Hazera	5	3	36	13	13	11	21
Petite Perfection	Syngenta	1	12	65	11	5	3	3
Precious Petite	Syngenta	0	2	50	15	16	5	12
RWT 8149	Syngenta	0	3	53	21	11	9	2
SR 8101	Sunseeds	0	0	18	10	13	21	38
SR 8103	Sunseeds	1	3	37	18	9	11	22
Vanessa	Sunseeds	1	2	24	18	15	16	24
ZG-8907	Zeraim Gedera	1	1	16	12	11	22	37
Average		1	2	27	13	12	12	33