



Rockmelon

Julie Bird, Principal Horticulturist, DPIFM Katherine

Site Selection: Site should be clean and free from sticks and soil should be well-drained.

Ground Preparation: A green manure crop should be grown on the site over the wet season. This should be incorporated into the soil about three weeks before planting. Disc soil with an offset disc to loosen the top 20 cm to allow hilling up.

Test soil pH. Adjust to 6.0-6.5 by applying dolomite or ag lime, preferably a week or two before planting. Form planting hill 40-50 cm wide and 10-20 cm high and incorporate basal fertiliser.

Lay 90-120 cm wide plastic mulch as well as drip tape at a depth of 10 cm. Rock melons can be grown without plastic mulch or by planting into a herbicide-treated and rolled green manure crop, but weeds may be an issue. Plant seeds at a spacing of 0.5 m along the row.

Planting Material: Direct seed or seedling.

Irrigation: After planting, it is important to keep the soil moist but not too wet. This encourages good root growth and retains the nutrients near the roots. Your irrigation monitoring tools should be indicating mild stress during the period between planting and flowering.

Once flowering has commenced, you need to keep the plants free of water stress (too little or too much). On sandy soils you could irrigate a few times per day to ensure the water does not go beyond the root zone. It is critical that your irrigation monitoring is kept up-to-date during this period.

When monitoring your irrigation, you should as a minimum, have tensiometers at 15 and 40 cm depth. At least one tensiometer of each depth per block, preferably two. A tensiometer at 15 cm should read between 5-15 kPa and a 40 cm tensiometer should read between 25-40 kPa.

Irrigate right through until the end of harvest. This is essential for sugar production in the fruit.

Nutrition: Obtain a pre-plant soil test.

	Nitrogen (kg/ha)	Phosphorus (kg/ha)	Potassium (kg/ha)	Calcium (kg/ha)
Base pre-plant	84	138	72	1100
Fertigation-Stage 1	10	4	7	
Fertigation-Stage 2	13	0	38	20

Apply most of the fertigated nitrogen during the first three weeks after planting and the fertigated potassium at golf ball sized fruit and 7-10 days later.

Inject trace elements in four pre-flowering fertigations to total 15 ZnSO₄:8 MnSO₄:2 Solubor (kg/ha/crop).

Monitor nutrition through leaf analyses at flowering and again at mid-fruit development and adjust nutrition, if necessary.

**DEPARTMENT OF PRIMARY
INDUSTRY, FISHERIES AND MINES**

Crops, Forestry and
Horticulture Division
GPO Box 3000
Darwin NT 0801
Tel: 08 8999 2357
Fax: 08 8999 2049
Email: horticulture@nt.gov.au
Web: www.horticulture.nt.gov.au

Disclaimer:

While all reasonable efforts have been made to ensure that the information contained in this publication is correct, the information covered is subject to change. The Northern Territory Government does not assume and hereby disclaims any express or implied liability whatsoever to any party for any loss or damage caused by errors or omissions, whether these errors or omissions result from negligence, accident or any other cause.

Pests: Cucumber moth caterpillar, heliothis caterpillar, pumpkin beetle, aphids, false wireworm, nematodes and ants.

Pollinators: Pollinators are essential; use European honeybees at three double hives/ha.

Diseases: Powdery mildew, downy mildew, gummy stem blight, watermelon mosaic virus and soil borne root diseases

Harvest: Harvest when melons develop a crack where the stalk is attached to the fruit (button). If stalk detaches readily, fruit is mature (full slip).