

# Franklin County Master Gardener Volunteer Vegetable Trials Evaluation 2023



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## Introduction

The Vegetable Trials project is part of the Ohio State University Extension Service, Franklin County Master Gardener program outreach to the Central Ohio Community. Its focus is conducting research on seeds, plants, and growing practices to provide information on improving yields for home gardeners in the area. This data is provided through the annual report for the project, available on the Extension Service website and an annual Top Producers handout, as shown in the Appendix. The project begins in January with seed selection for the varieties of seeds to be planted that year. Some seeds are germinated in The Ohio State University's greenhouse, while some are directly planted into the garden plot. The quarter-acre plot is prepared for planting by the Waterman Farm management, which tills the soil and adds compost. The plot is more specifically prepared by the Vegetable Trials' volunteers, who determine the arrangement of beds and varieties planted in the raised beds and open rows. Volunteers work Mondays and Thursdays during the growing season.

For the Vegetable Trials plot, 2023 was an especially challenging year, leading to reduced harvests for donation. Wide fluctuations in weather, from drought to heavy rains, heavy predation from groundhogs, rabbits, and various insects and diseases affected all plants' performances. An added challenge was the ongoing respiratory threat from air pollution from wildfires in the western United States and Canada.

After assessing all the data, the top producers chosen based on yield and performance were:

**Annina Eggplant**

**Gladiator Hybrid Tomato**

**Medium Rare Hybrid Tomato**

A link to the 2024 Top Producers handout is included in Appendix B.

## Method

The plot used in the 2023 Vegetable Trials is found within the Waterman Farm, a part of The Ohio State University's Agricultural Research and Development Center, located at the northwest corner of Kenny Road and Lane Avenue in Columbus, Ohio. The plot is 125' by 75' in size. A diagram of the 2023 plot appears in Appendix A.

The plot is organized into the following three areas:

1. On the south side there are ten raised beds which are 4' by 12' each.

2. Twelve cultivated field rows, divided by 5' paths. The warm weather varieties occupied the field rows. All the winter squash varieties occupy four row segments adjacent to each other. All tomato varieties and cucumbers were trellised on cattle panels. Some winter squash varieties were also trellised.
3. A small area with wildflowers is located north of the shed.

The areas between the rows were covered with heavy black landscape fabric, reusing last year's material. Zinnias and marigolds were planted at the end of each row segment for color and pollinator attraction. As closely as possible, the same number of plants were included in each row segment. Due to predation, a number of plant varieties needed reseeding or replanting. In some cases, as noted, reseeding was not possible.

To ensure that local gardeners can access Top Producer varieties, readily available catalogs are used. These are Burpee Seeds, Johnny's Select Seeds, and Seed Savers Exchange (unless otherwise noted). Three varieties of sweet potato slips were procured from Steele Plant Company. Dr. Sally Miller (OSU-Wooster) provided cucurbit seeds as part of her ongoing downy mildew monitoring project. Additionally, because of germination failure, additional varieties were planted from donations as noted in each section.

Warm weather varieties were sown in the OSU greenhouse six weeks before transplanting into the plot, using a potting mixture provided by OSU.

A variety of tactics were used to counter the animal challenges. Plantings in raised beds with surrounding fencing were used. Double fencing erected along the south boundary of the plot deterred, but did not eliminate groundhog predation. As an experiment, the Extension Service deployed two motion-activated light-and-sound alarms to deter the groundhogs. When activated, these alarms emitted strobing lights and the sounds of large dogs barking. The alarms were removed when they did not deter the groundhogs. Farm management set traps over the course of several weeks. Four groundhogs were trapped. This reduced the groundhog activity.

Row covers deployed over beans and sweet potatoes also deterred, but did not eliminate damage. Green bean plants were protected early in the season, but once the covers were removed, rabbits nearly totally destroyed the plants, leading to a total failure of bean harvest.

Sweet potato production was reduced because of vole predation. The small rodents thrived under the plastic cover, and greatly damaged the potatoes.

Once established, plants were evaluated weekly during the growing season. Harvested produce were weighed, then distributed to area food pantries. Veggie Trials donated 3,586 pounds of produce this year. Of that, 670 pounds was corn from the corn field sowed by the Waterman farm crew for donation.

## Weather Report

### Temperature, precipitation and growing days during the 2023 crop year

<b>2023</b>	Growing Degree Days at end of month	Growing Degree Days in month	2023 Temp.	2023 Precip.	Norm Temp.	Norm Precip	Temp. difference from norm	Precip. difference from norm
March	120	54	42.4	5.22	42.6	3.89	-0.20	1.33
April	323	216	53.9	3.17	53.7	3.66	0.20	-0.49
May	715	419	62.6	3.67	63.9	4.34	-1.30	-0.67
June	1269	561	69.3	3.71	72.3	4.37	-3.00	-0.66
July	2031	790	75.7	6.40	75.6	4.65	0.10	1.75
August	2696	710	73.0	4.48	74.5	4.08	-1.50	0.40
September	3209	554	68.9	0.77	68.0	3.30	0.90	-2.53
October	3470	282	57.6	3.11	56.0	3.16	1.60	-0.05

*Temps in Fahrenheit. Precipitation in inches.*

Data from NOAA Online Weather Data <https://nowdata.rcc-acis.org/iln/> and <https://www.weather.gov/wrh/climate?wfo=iln> and <https://weather.cfaes.osu.edu/gdd/>

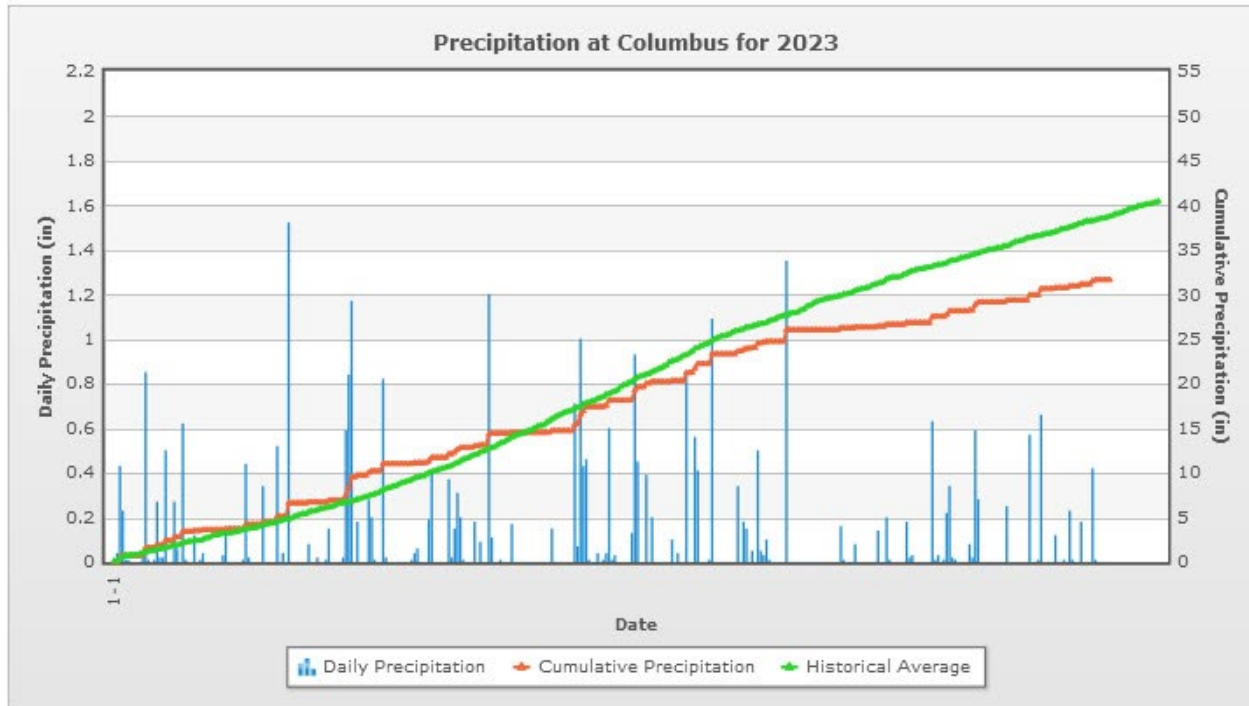
For Columbus, Ohio the average last freeze is April 18<sup>th</sup>. This year, the last freeze was April 25<sup>th</sup>. Our average first freeze is October 26<sup>th</sup>. This year, the date of our first freeze was October 31<sup>st</sup>.

The highest temperature recorded in Columbus, Ohio for 2023 was 94°, which happened on June 3, 2023. The 30-year average temperature for that date is 66.1°.

Typically Columbus receives 56.11 inches of precipitation annually, and 2023 saw a total annual rate of 40.2 inches. May 12<sup>th</sup> had the highest daily precipitation and September 2023 had the least amount of monthly precipitation.

To see rainfall amounts and soil temperatures for specific dates, click on the link below the next chart to interact with the data in the chart.





Precipitation and Soil Temperature from 1/1/2023 to 12/23/2023 at Columbus Data from <https://weather.cfaes.osu.edu/precipitationgraph.asp?locationid=14&startyear=2023>

## Vegetable Evaluation Data

A discussion of each group of vegetables follows, including a description of each cultivar (usually from the seed catalog from which the seeds were purchased), days to harvest, seed source, overall rating for the season, yield data, and comments about pests and other problems encountered.

In the tables below, the “overall rating” refers to the 1-5 scale. The rating is the “mode” (most frequently occurring value), used in place of the arithmetic mean (“average”) because the categorical judgments that we make are qualitative data for which arithmetic means are not appropriate. The “harvest date” refers to the date of the first significant harvest that included more than one or two fruits. The cultivars listed below were evaluated by the participating Master Gardeners weekly from July 5, 2023 through October 12, 2023 using a Likert scale ranging from 1 (“perfect condition”) through 5 (“dead”). Half were evaluated by the group that met on Mondays; the other half by the Thursday gardeners. Once a cultivar was categorized as “dead” (5), the data analysis was discontinued.

## Warm-Season Crops

### Beans

**Blue Lake Bush.** “Organic Heirloom. Tender annual 15”, 6-7” pods. The best tasting green bean in our trials. Productive plants yield tender, sweet, round stringless beans that are great for fresh eating, canning and freezing.” 55 days. Seeds of Change

**Golden Wax Improved Bush.** “Heavy yields of delicious, buttery flavored, stringless pods grow 4-6” long on early bush-type plants.” 55-60 days. Burpee

**Velour Bush.** “First purple filet bean. ‘Extra-fine’ grade beans are 4–5" long with straight, slender, bright purple pods. Turns green upon cooking. Medium-size upright plants yield well. High resistance to bean mosaic virus and halo blight. Small, light brown seeds. Bush bean.” 51 days. Johnny’s Selected Seeds



On 6/1/2023 the beans were seeded in the field in three, twenty-foot rows. These were covered with row cover on 6/8/2023. Unfortunately, as soon as the beans were uncovered the plants were eaten. No harvest was secured. The photo shows the eaten stalks of the bean plants.

Cultivar	Overall Rating	Duration from Seed to first Harvest (days)	First Harvest	Length of Harvest (days)	Last Harvest	Total Yield (lbs.)
Blue Lake Bush	4		none			
Golden Wax Improved Bush	4		none			
Velour Bush	4		none			

### Cucumber

**Honey Plus Hybrid.** “It’s the cucumber that has everything: a smooth skin, pretty color, and taste both crispy-crunchy and sweet as honey. One cool cucumber plant will deliver 20–25 3–4" mini fruits with flavor heavily and early to the max. Baby-sized ‘Honey Plus’ has it all: smooth pale-green to white skin and crispy-crunchy, sweet-as-honey, golden-fleshed fruit. Highly productive 20–24" plants yield glossy 5½–8 oz. fruits in just 40 days. Great for fresh snacking, salads and pickling.” 40 days. Burpee

**Parade.** “Popular Russian variety. Heavy set of uniform fruits that mature at relatively the same time, making it a good processing variety. Fruits are 5" long by 2" in diameter, one of our favorites at Heritage Farm. Resistant to extreme weather conditions. 50-60 days.” Seed Savers Exchange

On 6/5/2023 twenty-nine Honey Plus Hybrid seeds were planted 8 inches apart in a twenty-foot row. Twenty-four Parade seeds were planted 10” apart in a twenty foot row.

On 6/15/2023, ten of the 29 Honey Plus Hybrid seeds had sprouted. Ten of the 24 Parade seeds sprouted. Some of the cotyledons look like they had been nipped off, maybe by rabbits. Five-foot cattle panels were used to support both cultivars.

To replace eaten plants, reseeding took place June 19th. The plants evidenced cucumber beetle predation throughout the season. Dead plants were removed in August.

Cultivar	Overall Rating	Duration from Seed to First Harvest (days)	First Harvest	Length of Harvest (days)	Last Harvest	Total Yield (lbs.)
Honey Plus Hybrid	2	45	7/20/2023	32	8/21/2023	4.6
Parade	2.5	45	7/20/2023	14	8/3/2023	4.1

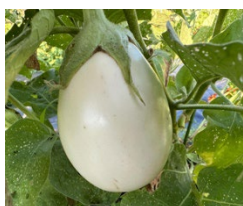
## Eggplant



**Annina F1.** “Spineless, purple-striped Italian type. Glossy, variegated eggplant with attractive teardrop shape. Avg. 7–8" long by 3–4" diameter. Earlier and higher-yielding than Nubia, which it replaced. Bright green calyx. No spines. USDA Certified Organic.” 65 days. Johnny’s Selected Seeds



**Midnight Moon.** “Here’s the one you want — it’s the finest eggplant we’ve seen in years! Ripens earlier than ‘Black Beauty’, with the creamy white, nearly seedless flesh of ‘Early Midnight’. Big yields of voluptuous rounded fruits. In the 3- to 6-inch range, they are just the right size for your favorite ratatouille or eggplant parmesan recipes, or for simply slicing and tossing on the grill while summer lasts!” 60 days. Burpee



**Paloma F1.** “Vivid white skin with a clean look. Paloma's bell-shaped fruits have distinctive ribbing and mildly sweet flavor and creamy texture. Ideal for farmers' markets, since white eggplants are thin-skinned and easily bruised, precluding them from shipping. For an eye-catching market presentation, display Paloma with Nubia and Beatrice. Short,



healthy plants and more productive than Clara, which it replaced. Green calyx.” 65 days. Johnny’s Selected Seeds

Twenty-four seeds of Annina F1 and Paloma F1 were seeded in the greenhouse on 4/14/2023. Carol Williams gave us 6 Midnight Moon eggplants. After the plants were hardened, 7 Annina, 6

Midnight Moon, and 14 Paloma were planted in the plot on 6/1/2023. Three-foot stakes were used to support each plant.

All three varieties of eggplant were highly rated for general overall health throughout the growing season with minimal leaf damage. The eggplant varieties were quite showy in terms of production of beautiful flowers and eventual fruit. The variety of colors and shapes from the eggplant varieties provided a pleasant visual experience when evaluating or harvesting. From the vivid white of the bell-shaped Paloma to the purple-striping of the Annina, you could sense calmness when your eyes caught a glimpse of the solid roundness of the purple Midnight Moon. One of the garden’s top producers this year was the Paloma eggplant. This eggplant deserves a place in every garden for its simple, elegant beauty and excellent hardiness.

Cultivar	Overall Rating	Duration from Seed to first Harvest (days)	First Harvest	Length of Harvest (days)	Last Harvest	Total Yield (lbs.)
Annina	1.5	101	7/24/2023	94	10/26/2023	58.9
Midnight Moon	1.5	46 (transplant)	7/17/2023	101	10/26/2023	37.2
Paloma	1.5	101	7/24/2023	94	10/26/2023	87.9

## Okra



**Go Big.** ”Meet ‘Go Big’, the new okra powerhouse, setting a new standard for okra greatness. ‘Go Big’s towering plants produce a payload of really big, luscious dark-green 7" x 1" pods—ready to rock gumbos and stews with rich flavor and soul power. Strikingly attractive 7 flowering plants with outsize red-centered yellow blooms lend statuesque ornamental presence to the back of the garden border.” 60-65 days. Burpee



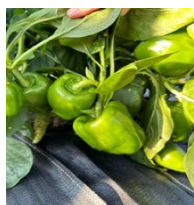
On 6/12/2023 a 20’ row of ‘Go Big’ Okra was planted.

The flowers were very colorful. As the pods grew, they changed from a light green without much fuzzy texture to a greener color, and the stalks became redder. The evaluation was good for the overall plant. In August the plant was over 4’5” tall. Over 29 pounds we harvested from July 31 until mid-October.

Cultivar	Overall Rating	Duration from Seed to first Harvest (days)	First Harvest	Length of Harvest (days)	Last Harvest	Total Yield (lbs.)
Go Big	1	60	7/31/2023	77	10/16/2023	29.3



## Peppers



**California Wonder.** “HEIRLOOM. The standard bell pepper. The standard bell for many decades, this 1928 introduction is still the largest open-pollinated, heirloom bell pepper you can grow. A perfect stuffing pepper that is blocky (4" x 3 1/2"), thick-walled, tender and flavorful.” 75 days. Livingston Seed



**Jalapeno Early.** “Open-pollinated jalapeño. Cylindrical fruits are of the smaller, traditional size (2-2 1/2") and have more checking than our hybrids. Earlier but much lower yielding than our later varieties. Small plants. Best for early season plantings for an early crop. We suggest using our other varieties for main season production.” 60 green; 80 red ripe. Johnny’s Selected Seeds



**Orange Blaze.** “All-America Selections is pleased to announce a sweet orange bell pepper as the newest AAS Winner for 2011. Although colored peppers can be difficult to grow, the new AAS Winner Orange Blaze F1 solves that problem. This variety proved itself a winner in AAS Trialing Grounds across North America due to early maturity, sweet flavor, and disease resistance. It matured to a beautiful orange color earlier than the comparisons. Expect a very sweet flavor at full orange color about 65-70 days from transplant. Orange Blaze F1 produces 3 to 4-inch long fruits about 1 1/2 inches wide with 2-3 lobes. High resistance to diseases Xcv 0-3, 7, 8 -Bacterial Leaf Spot and Tm Po- Tobamovirus ensure a larger harvest.” 65-70 days. Stan Corl donated purchased plants.



**Roulette.** “A 2018 All-America Selections winning habanero that has no heat. It offers all the flavors of a traditional habanero, but it will not trouble those who can’t eat a hot pepper. In addition, the variety is early-maturing and produces up to 100 peppers per plant. Fruit matures to a brilliant red.” 85 days. Bonnie Plants, LLC

We originally seeded 4 other varieties of peppers. None of our peppers seeded in the greenhouse were viable. So pepper transplants from Carol Williams, Stan Corl, and Pat Claeys were used. On 5/30/2023, 12 California Wonder, 10 Jalapeno Early, 8 Orange Blaze, and 12 Roulette were transplanted into the field. On 6/1/2023, five California Wonder were nipped off, possibly by a groundhog. We put up more fencing to protect the plants. On 6/1/2023, we transplanted five California Wonder peppers from the raised beds into the plot. On 6/10/23, three more peppers were nipped off, so two California Wonder and one Roulette peppers were reseeded with two seeds in each space.

Despite the somewhat rocky start mentioned above, the pepper plants thrived in the field location over the growing season, receiving overall ratings of “1/perfect” throughout the summer. Some of the varieties faded after our early frost but many of the plants remained until the last harvest.

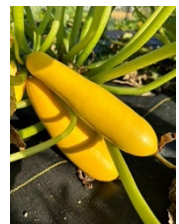
Our findings contrast somewhat with the descriptions from the seed catalogs. The Jalapeno Early cultivar was not especially early nor faded appreciably late. Again, in contrast with the seed catalog description, Orange Blaze did not change to its anticipated orange coloration in a timely manner with many of the final fruit still green. While the Roulette pepper did not prosper early in the season as the seed catalog predicted, it was an exceptionally healthy plant once it got started. While both a small plant with small fruit, Roulette outperformed the other three peppers once the season developed, ending up as the total yield winner!

Cultivar	Overall Rating	Duration from Transplant until Harvest	First Harvest	Length of Harvest (days)	Last Harvest	Total Yield (lbs.)
California Wonder	1	37	7/6/2023	112	10/26/2023	45.2
Jalapeno Early	1	51	7/20/2023	95	10/23/2023	42.4
Orange Blaze	1	48	7/17/2023	101	10/26/2023	24.4
Roulette	1	72	8/10/2023	77	10/26/2023	50.6

## Summer Squash



**Grey.** “A favorite of vegetable gardeners since the 1950s. Attractive summer squash is medium-green with silvery speckles. Tasty 7-inch long fruits are straight, smooth & cylindrical Open habit.” 48 days. Ferry-Morse.

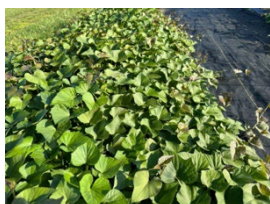


**Rise and Shine.** “Things are looking up for small-space squash lovers. This revolutionary vertical-growing variety gives you tasty, bright-yellow fruits, even in modest-sized gardens. Stake to support the bushy 4’ tall plants, which spread out about 3’ max. Gorgeous 4-8" spineless fruits pack big, rich, buttery flavor and are bitter-free. As good as gold, this towering crop will give your zucchini a run for its money.” 55 days. Burpee

The summer squash were seeded in the field on 6/8/23. Some were reseeded on 6/20/23. Poor germination necessitated reseeded to produce an adequate number of viable plants. Both varieties exhibited good growth habits and suffered minimal plant damage from disease or pests. Grey matured and reached peak production slightly earlier than Rise and Shine. Both were prolific producers throughout the growing season with the most abundant harvests from the end of July to the end of August.

Cultivar	Overall Rating	Duration from Seed to first Harvest (days)	First Harvest	Length of Harvest (days)	Last Harvest	Total Yield (lbs.)
Grey Zucchini	1.5	39	7/17/2023	94	10/19/2023	131.7
Rise and Shine Yellow	1.5	39	7/17/2023	84	10/9/2023	144.5

## Sweet Potatoes



**Beauregard.** “Beauregard sweet potatoes are an outstanding release that has been accepted by farmers everywhere. Chances are this is the variety that is available in your local market. Red-orange outside color and orange inside color. Quick maturing with good shape.” 90-100 days. Steele Plant Company



**Georgia Jets.** “Georgia Jet is our best-tasting sweet potato variety! This variety produces large sweet potatoes that are more round as opposed to being elongated like other varieties. Georgia Jet sweet potatoes have a beautiful red exterior with a bright orange flesh.” 90 days. Steele Plant Company



**O’Henry.** “O’ Henry is a white-skinned, cream-fleshed sweet potato that cooks up drier than other sweet potato varieties.” 90-100 days. Steele Plant Company

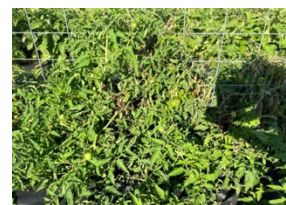
On 6/15/2023 the sweet potato slips were transplanted into the field. The slips sat in the Extension Building over a long weekend and were very dry with dead looking leaves when they were transplanted. We covered them with a row cover to protect them from predation. The transplants thrived despite a less than optimal start and produced an abundant leaf cover. Unfortunately, this year the harvest was reduced by voles which thrived under the plastic between the plants.

Cultivar	Overall Rating	Planted	Duration from Slips to Harvest (days)	Harvested	Length of Harvest (days)	Total Yield (lbs.)
Beauregard	1	10/9/2023	147	10/12/2023	3	201.5
Georgia Jets	1	10/9/2023	147	10/12/2023	3	68.4
O’Henry	1	10/9/2023	147	10/12/2023	3	90.9

## Tomatoes



**Black Krim.** “HEIRLOOM. Medium-sized, very dark maroon beefsteak, with wonderfully rich flavor. This medium-sized, very dark maroon beefsteak, with wonderfully rich flavor, originated in Crimea, a peninsula in the Black Sea with perfect "tomato summers". Extremely tasty.” Indeterminate. 8 oz fruit.” 80 days. Burpee





**Cream Sausage.** “Yellow elongated plum-shaped fruits with meaty flesh and pleasantly mild flavor. Great for salsa and salads. Productive bushy plants do not require staking, excellent for containers. Determinate - Fruit ripens over a 2 week period, 80 days from transplant.” Seed Savers Exchange



**Estiva.** “Exclusive! Delicious slicer with impressive heat tolerance.

7–9 oz. tomatoes resist cracking and are remarkably uniform. High production and premium flavor in a mid-size fruit. Balanced plant habit is well suited for high tunnels. Bred for tunnel production in the Mediterranean region, Estiva is known for its uncanny ability to set fruit in excessive heat, and it produces fully loaded trusses of deep red fruit over a

long season. High resistance to Fusarium wilt races 1, 2, tobacco mosaic virus, and Verticillium wilt. Indeterminate.” 70 days. Johnny’s Selected Seeds



**Gladiator Hybrid.** “A champion ‘Roma’ tomato with unbeatable vigor, flavor, aroma and yield. Gigantic ‘Gladiator’ is the hands-down champion in the arena of ‘Roma’ tomatoes. With an unbeatable armor of vigor, flavor, aroma and yield, it bears a bounty of oval 8 oz. fruit in a small garden. Its dense flesh and tangy taste make ‘Gladiator’ victorious for imparting rich, robust flavor to paste, sauces, soups, salsa, or ketchup. Strong roots conquer enemies

such as blossom end rot. Indeterminate.” 70 days. Burpee



**Medium Rare Hybrid.** “Abundant yield of pink beefsteaks loaded with savory and smoky-flavor. Sink your teeth into Medium Rare’s earthy fragrance and rich, meaty flavor. Pair a thick, juicy slice of our deeply-shouldered beefsteak with medium rare steak for the sandwich of your summertime dreams. Medium Rare’s translucent pink color lets more light into the huge 16–18 oz. fruits—adding a natural sparkle to the

savory, smoky flavor. Beginning mid-summer, one single 6–7 vine commences its seasonal payload of 18–20 virtuoso tomatoes. Proven performer tolerates challenging weather conditions. Unusual earliness, ideal for Northern US.” 75-80 days. Burpee



Twenty-four seeds of each variety were planted in the greenhouse on 04/14/2023. When the plants were taken out of the greenhouse to be hardened, 7 Black Krim, 24 Cream Sausage, 11 Estiva, 15 Gladiator Hybrid and 10 Medium Rare Hybrid were viable to be fostered.

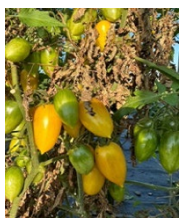


On 5/22/2023 9 Black Krim (2 from Carol), 12 Cream Sausage, 11 Estiva, 12 Gladiator Hybrids, and 10 Medium Rare Hybrids were transplanted into the field between the fabric with a drip line but no plastic overtop. On 5/30/2023 another 6 Cream Sausage were transplanted in the field in row #2 under plastic. On 6/8/2023, two Black Krim were seeded in two empty spaces. Five-foot cattle panels were used to support all of the plants.

Fortunately, tomatoes are fast growing because they experienced some rabbit damage towards the end of July, about a month after being transplanted and right before the harvest started. In mid-August, Black Krim had some cracks and splits, which is common to heirloom varieties. All varieties produced well from the beginning of August through mid-October, in spite of damage to the foliage. Mid-September we re-did weaving on the tomato vines to keep them off the ground and better protected from small predators. Gladiator Hybrid and Medium Rare Hybrid were chosen as two of the three Top Producers for 2023. Medium Rare Hybrid produced 29 pounds of tomatoes per plant, while Gladiator Hybrid produced over 25 pounds per plant.

Cultivar	Overall Rating	Duration from Seed to first Harvest (days)	Duration from Transplant until Harvest	First Harvest	Length of Harvest (days)	Last Harvest	Total Yield (lbs.)
Black Krim	1.5	104	66	7/27/2023	91	10/26/2023	162.3
Cream Sausage	1.5	108	70	7/31/2023	84	10/23/2023	168.4
Cream Sausage (plastic)	1.5	97	51	7/20/2023	81	10/9/2023	46.8
Estiva	1.5	111	73	8/3/2023	84	10/26/2023	220.1
Gladiator Hybrid	1	90	52	7/13/2023	102	10/23/2023	306.9
Medium Rare Hybrid	1	108	70	7/31/2023	87	10/26/2023	291.7

## Cherry Tomatoes



**Bliss Hybrid.** “Snackable fruits are irresistible fresh off the vine. A joy to behold and to eat! These almond-shaped, mirthfully and lightly sweet 1 oz. tomatoes ripen to a dazzling yellow with unique green stripes. Snackable fruits are irresistible fresh off the vine. Heavily yielding plants offer a happy windfall of tomatoes from the height of summer until frost. Loads of bold color for party trays and salads. Follow your bliss!” 70 days. Burpee



**Two Tasty Hybrid.** “Voted best-tasting tomato out of hundreds rated by Burpee garden interns. One plus one equals so much more than two in our newest two-bite cherry tomato. Bicolor skin hints at the flavor synergy: sweet rich-red and savory purple-black combine to give you a new third flavor. Voted best-tasting tomato out of hundreds rated by Burpee garden interns, this wonderfully complex fruit even beat the legendary ‘Sun Gold’. Harvest clusters of round 1½-2" tomatoes with firm texture and juicy but dripless interiors. Two much goodness, indeed!” 70 days. Burpee

Twelve seeds of each variety were planted in the greenhouse on 04/14/2023. When the plants were taken out of the greenhouse to be hardened, 9 Bliss and 8 Two Tasty were viable to be fostered. On 5/22/2023, 6 Bliss Hybrid and 6 Two Tasty Hybrid were transplanted into the field between the fabric with a drip line but no plastic overtop. Two sixteen-foot cattle panels shaped into an arching trellis were used to support these plants.



The two types of cherry tomatoes were evaluated once a week from August 21 through October 9. This included 7 weekly evaluations. For this entire time, Two Tasty looked better and out-performed Bliss Hybrid. BH always had fewer flowers, fewer fruits and thinner foliage. Unfortunately, several volunteers felt that Two Tasty wasn't as tasty as Burpee stated.

Cultivar	Overall Rating	Duration from Seed to first Harvest (days)	Duration from Transplant until Harvest	First Harvest	Length of Harvest (days)	Last Harvest	Total Yield (lbs.)
Bliss Hybrid	1.5	104	66	07/27/2023	91	10/26/2023	47.5
Two Tasty Hybrid	1	104	66	07/27/2023	91	10/26/2023	141

## Melons



**Amish Melon.** “Amish melon was first offered in the SSE Yearbook in 1983. Oval fruits are 9” long and weigh 4-7 pounds. Sweet orange flesh is very juicy with full muskmelon flavor and a rather thick rind. Produces good crops under almost any conditions at Heritage Farm headquarters in northeast Iowa. 80-90 days.” Seed Savers Exchange

Amish melons were seeded on 6/5/2023 in a 20 foot row. Seven out of ten germinated by 6/15/2023.

**Whatamelon.** “Delightfully speckled, golden-yellow melon is juicy-sweet, making for delicious midsummer refreshment. Turkey is renowned for outstanding melons, and ‘Whatamelon’ this is! Delightfully speckled, golden-yellow melon is juicy-sweet, making for delicious midsummer refreshment. Attractive 7–8” fruits’ flavor has a watermelon accent, suffusing the enticing, soft, creamy white flesh. Gorgeous Turkish specialty melon grows on vigorous 5-6’ long vines.” 50-55 days. Burpee



Whatamelon were seeded on 6/5/2023 in a twenty foot row. Seventeen out of twenty germinated by 6/15/2023.

**Hale’s Best Cantaloupe.** “Hales Best Cantaloupe is a classic heirloom muskmelon. It is a reliable heavily netted melon that produces a slightly ribbed 1.8-2.7 kg (4-6 lb) melon that is on average 17 cm (7”) long and 15 cm (6”) in diameter. The juicy salmon orange flesh is simply delicious with a strong fruity scent. The melons are mostly fleshy with a small seed cavity. They are produced on strong vining plants that can reach 1.5 m (5’) long and about 30 cm (12”) high.” Seeds from Dr. Sally Miller



Hale’s Best were seeded on 6/5/2023 in a twenty foot row. Ten out of ten Hale’s Best germinated by 6/15/2023.

**Sugar Baby Watermelon.** Sweet, fine-textured, medium-red flesh. The round, 12 lb., dark green skinned melons grow 8 in. across. GARDEN HINTS: For early fruiting and to overcome a short growing season, plants may be started indoors in peat pots. Water during hot, dry periods. Burpee

Seven hills of Sugar Baby Watermelon were seeded in a raised bed on 5/30/2023.

In July three out of four of the melons were healthy with strong vines, flowers and early fruit. The healthy cultivars were the Amish Cantaloupe, Hale’s Best Cantaloupe and Sugar Baby. In contrast, most of the Whatamelons were dead or dying. Since we were unsure what was affecting them, photos and a description were sent to Dr. Sally Miller for her input. The mystery continued because she was unable to determine whether the culprit was an insect or pathogen.

By mid-August there was still fruit on the Hale’s Best even though the vines died. The vines of the Amish Cantaloupes showed increasing damage; however, there was still fruit even if it was small. The Sugar Baby continued to have healthy vines and lots of fruit. From late August to mid-September, we had good production from the Amish cantaloupes and Sugar Baby melons. By the third week of September, most of the melon plants were dead.

Cultivar	Overall Rating	Duration from Seed to first Harvest (days)	First Harvest	Length of Harvest (days)	Last Harvest	Total Yield (lbs.)
Amish Cantaloupe	1.5	77	8/21/2023	28	9/18/2023	110.7
Hale’s Best Cantaloup	2.3	77	8/21/2023	0	8/21/2023	10
Sugar Baby Watermelon	1	83	8/21/2023	38	9/28/2023	47.8
Whatamelon	2.5		none			

## Winter Squash in rows



**Butterscotch butternut.** “Exclusive! Tastiest small butternut. Sweet, rich, complex flavor. The perfect size for dinner (no leftovers) and ideal for growers selling at farmers' markets and filling CSA boxes. Matures early at 1–2 lb., with no curing needed before it can be enjoyed. Stores up to 3 months after harvest. Short vines. Intermediate resistance to powdery mildew. Our thanks to Cornell University for their help in developing this variety. NOTE: If growing for the 1-lb size, we recommend giving each plant only 6 sq.ft. of space. AAS Winner.” 100 days. Seeds from Dr. Sally Miller

Ten Butterscotch seeds were planted on 6/5/2023 in a 20’ row. On 6/15/2023, eight out of ten seeds sprouted. Two were reseeded on 6/15/2023.



**Dostal Cucumber summer/winter squash.** “(C. pepo) Donated to SSE by Arthur Dostal. A variety grown by his parents, Lewis and Mary Dostal of Tama Co., Iowa, who reportedly received it from family friends. Begins as cream-white and green, maturing to dark green. Sweet flavor with buttery smooth texture when grown as a winter squash, but also delicious as a summer squash. 90 days.” Seed Savers Exchange.



Ten Dostal Cucumbers were seeded on 6/5/2023 in a 20’ row. On 6/15/2023, eight out of ten seeds sprouted and two were reseeded. Almost 36 pounds of fruit were harvested between August 7th and September 11th.

**Taybelle PM acorn.** “Taybelle PM Acorn Squash is a hybrid acorn squash variety with early maturity and powdery mildew resistance. Uniform fruits turn from dark green to jet black at maturity.” 80 Days. Seeds from Dr. Sally Miller

Forty-five seeds planted on 6/5/2023 in a 75’ row. On 7/10/23 the cultivar had a number 1 rating, but insect eggs were detected and removed. Harvest occurred between 7/27/23 and 9/18/23 and consisted of 44.6 pounds.

**Thunder kabocha.** “A Kabocha that is very dark green, uniform in size and a very high yielder. The flesh is superior, dry and delicious.” 85 days. Seeds from Dr. Sally Miller

Ten Thunder seeds were planted on 6/5/2023 in a 20’ row. On 6/15/2023, six out of ten seeds sprouted. Four were reseeded. On 7/10/23 they had a number 1 rating even though insect eggs were detected and removed. No fruit was harvested.



## Winter Squash on trellises



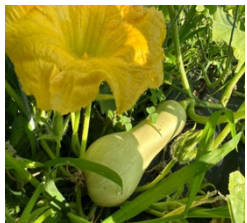
**Butterbaby butternut.** “These irresistible personal-sized butternuts are deliciously sweet and rich flavored. Uniform fruit average between ½ and 1 ½ pounds each with an appealing tan colored skin and deep orange flesh. Butterbaby ripens earlier than other mini butternuts and stores up to 4 months. Space-saving semi-bush plants can be trained up a trellis for extra real estate conservation.” 105-110 days.

This squash was grown on a trellis and planted somewhat later than in the prior year. Harvest occurred between 9/11/23 and 10/19/23 with a total harvest of 16.3 pounds.



**Calabaza butternut.** “The firm, yellow to orange flesh surrounds a large, central seed cavity with stringy pulp and many small, flat, and hard cream-colored seeds. Calabaza squash, when cooked, is smooth, fine-textured, and has a mild, sweet, and nutty flavor similar to butternut or acorn squash.”

This squash didn’t thrive. Wood chips were dumped on that area in the spring where it was later planted and we think that may have interfered with its growth. No fruit was harvested.



**Hunter F1 butternut.** “This British bred variety is perfectly adapted to our cooler climate, producing very high yields of 5-6 squash per plant! It forms a bushy, open plant that allows the sunlight to penetrate for improved ripening. Crops are quick to set and ripen, so you can harvest the pale-tan, pear-shaped fruits, in just 95 days from sowing. The fruits have a small seed cavity and weigh around 1 ¾ lb-2 ¾ lb per squash, with a lovely, sweet flavor. This versatile variety is delicious roasted, baked, mashed or made into soups.” 95 days.

This butternut squash was planted beside a trellis at the end of the row on the north side of the garden. It only produced 3.3 pounds of fruit.

Cultivar	Overall Rating	Duration from Seed to first Harvest (days)	First Harvest	Length of Harvest (days)	Last Harvest	Total Yield (lbs.)
Butterscotch	1.5	56	7/31/2023	38	9/7/2023	22.1
Dostal Cucumber	1.5	63	8/7/2023	35	9/11/2023	35.8
Taybelle	2.5	52	7/27/2023	53	9/18/2023	44.6
Thunder	2		none			
Butterbaby	1	98	9/11/2023	38	10/19/2023	16.3
Calabaza	2.5		none			
Hunter F1	1.5	98	9/11/2023	14	9/25/2023	3.3

## Master Gardener Volunteers

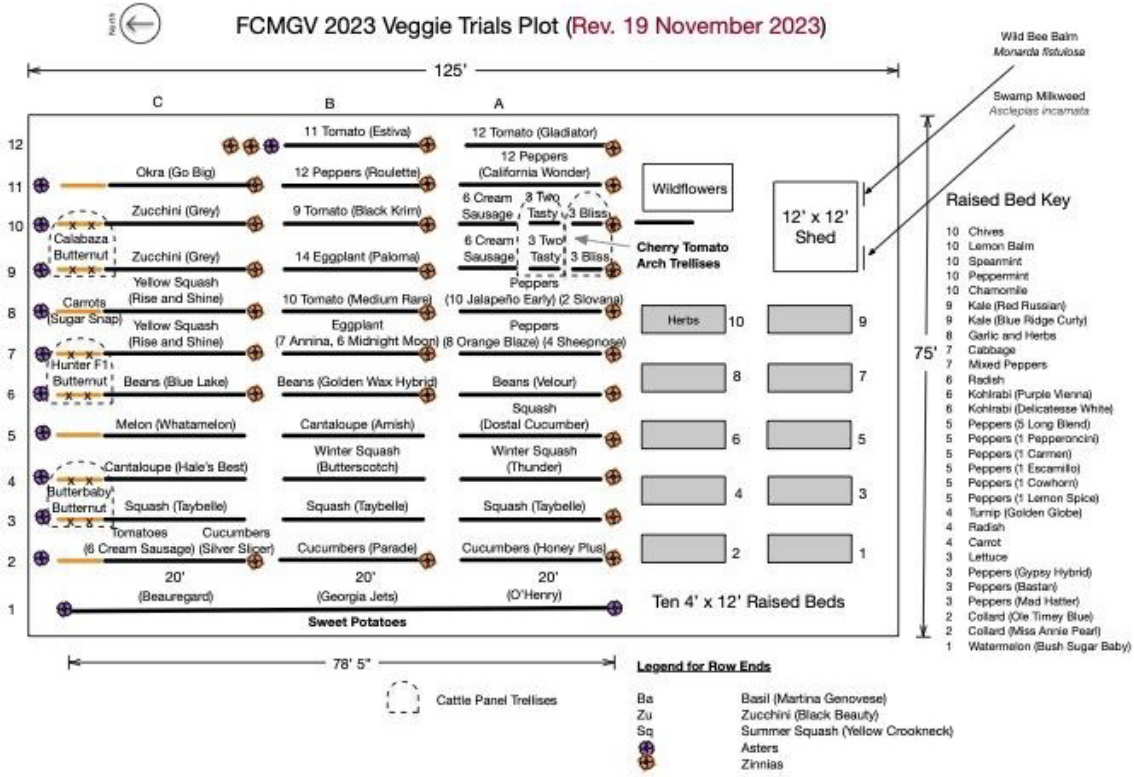
All volunteers in the 2023 evaluation project are Master Gardener volunteers from The Ohio State University's Franklin County Extension Program. Karin Arnold, Chris Atzberger, Pat Claeys, Debbie Falter, Lorraine Normore, Judy Rogers, and Carol Williams provided leadership from planning to final evaluation and report completion. Some volunteers were experienced vegetable gardeners, while others were still learning. Thanks to these Master Gardeners for their tireless efforts in planning, planting, maintaining, evaluating, and harvesting the plot throughout this usually hot and dry season:

Karin Arnold\*, Christina Atzberger\*, Linda Bauer\*, Pam Bradigan-Sestile, Steven Carter, Pat Claeys\*, Stan Corl, Chris Doolittle, Debbie Falter\*, Laurie Fomay, Gail Gross-Brown, Maggie Harriman, Diane Harry, Ann Henkener\*, Barb House\*, Jodi Lombardo\*, Nancy Loy, Monica Neil\*, Lorraine Normore\*, Susan Rector, Sam Schaadt, Judy Rodgers\*, and Carol Williams\* (\* volunteers who worked 36 or more hours at the Veggie Trial Garden)

Data for this report was compiled by Karin Arnold. The report was written by Karin Arnold, Chris Atzberger, Linda Bauer, Pat Claeys, Debbie Falter, Gail Gross Brown, Ann Henkener, Barb House, Jodi Lombardo, Lorraine Normore, Judy Roger, and Carol Williams. Photos were added by Pat Claeys.

Special thanks to Mike Hogan, Extension Educator & Associate Professor, Dept of Agriculture & Natural Resources for his continual assistance and support.

# Appendices





## Vegetable Trials Top Producers

What should I plant this year? To help home gardeners in Franklin County answer this question, Master Gardener volunteers manage the Vegetable Trials research garden. Each year, two or more varieties of the vegetables most popular among home gardeners are raised using good cultural practices and evaluated for plant health and yield.

The Vegetable Trials Top Producers handouts from previous years can be found at the link below. More detailed results of the annual Vegetable Trials are also available at:

<https://franklin.osu.edu/program-areas/master-gardener-volunteers/veggie-trials>.