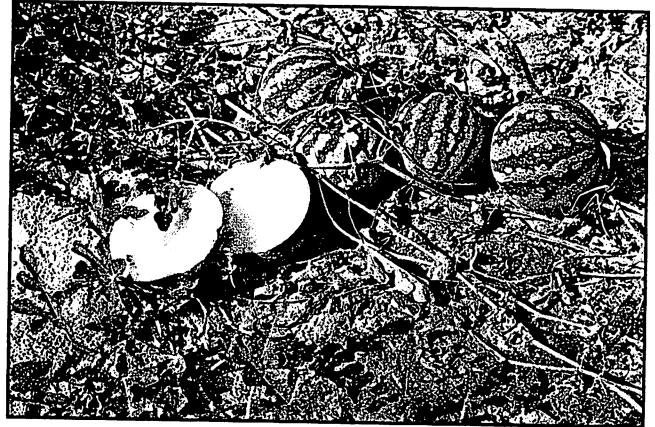


# Citron, Preserving Melon

*Citrullus lanatus* (*C. vulgaris*) var. *citroides* is a member of the Cucurbitaceae (gourd) family. Don't confuse this with the other, better-known fruit also called citron; that fruit, *Citrus medica*, grows on a small tree and looks like a lemon.

Citron or preserving melon is a close relative of watermelon, but is inedible raw. The flesh and rind are sometimes used for making preserves and pickles. The fruit resembles a watermelon, and is round to oval, 6 to 12 inches long, and light green with darker green stripes and a smooth surface. The flesh is typically white, although some forms have light green or pink flesh. Citron fruit is so tough that you can bounce it on the floor with only a small chance that it will burst. The plant is a low, spreading vine. The plant has both male and female flowers; bees are required for pollination. It is native to Africa.

Citron grows as a weed in California and can infest annual crops, orchards, vineyards, roadsides, ditchbanks, and sandy, dry river or creek beds. It is a troublesome weed in Imperial Valley asparagus fields. Where watermelons are grown, citron becomes particularly undesirable since the two plants readily hybridize.



*Citron is a close relative of watermelon, but is inedible raw. Mature fruit are 6 to 12 inches long.*  
(Photo: Hunter Johnson)

## Market Information

**Use.** Citron flesh and rind are sometimes used for sweet preserves and glacé fruit. The fruit is occasionally used as hogfeed. Commercial production is rare.

## Sources

### Seed

Le Jardin du Gourmet, P.O. Box 75, St. Johnsbury Center, VT 05863

Seeds Blüm, Idaho City Stage, Boise, ID 83706

### More information

Rubatzky, Vincent, and Mas Yamaguchi. 1997. *World vegetables, 2d ed.* Chapman and Hall, New York, NY.

Stephens, James. *Minor vegetables.* 1988. Cooperative Extension Bulletin SP-40, University of Florida, Gainesville, FL.

University of California. 1996. WI-131 citron, in *Grower's weed identification handbook.* Publication 4030, UC Division of Agriculture and Natural Resources, Oakland, CA.

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