



ALMANAC

Thursday, May 1, 2025



ORDER YOUR ALMANAC TODAY!

HOME > GARDENING > GROWING GUIDES

How to Grow Watermelon Plants: The Complete Guide

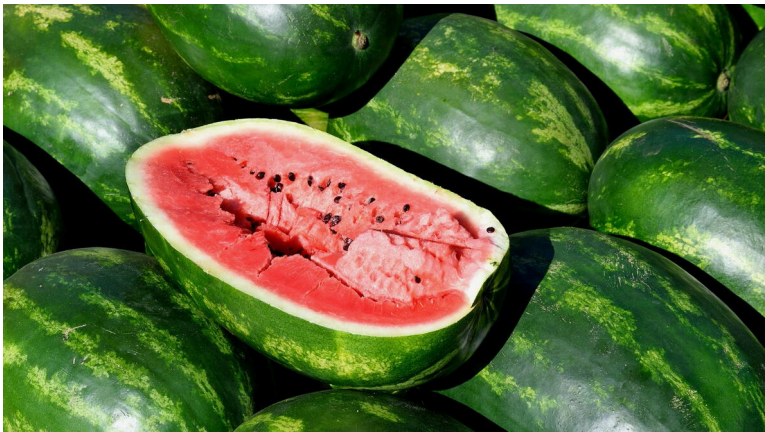


Photo Credit: Pixabay

Bo	<i>Citrullu</i>
ta	s
ni	<i>lanatus</i>
cal	
Na	
m	
e:	
PI	<u>Fruit</u>
an	

FREE GUIDE!



pe
:

Su [Full](#)
n [Sun](#)
Ex
po
su
re:

So [Slightly](#)
il [Acidic](#)
pH [to](#)
: [Neutral](#)

Bl [Summ](#)
oo [er](#)
m
Ti
m
e:

Fl [Yellow](#)
ow
er
Co
lor
:

Planting, Growing, and Harvesting Watermelons

Last Updated: June 28, 2024

Sign up for daily gardening advice and tips

SIGN UPADVERTISEMENT

**The Almanac Garden Planner -
Use It Free for 7 Days!**



Plan your 2025 garden with our
award-winning Garden Planner.

TRY NOW

Watermelon thrives in hot summer temperatures. These popular melons are easy to grow in a home garden, and they deliver far more flavor than those you find in a grocery store. Learn all about planting, growing, and harvesting watermelon.

ADVERTISEMENT

All About Watermelon s

Because watermelons need a long period of warm weather to grow well, they tend to be more popular in warmer climates with long growing seasons. However, gardeners in colder climates can still successfully grow watermelons by [starting seeds indoors](#) or purchasing young plants from a nursery and by growing shorter-season varieties. Depending on the variety of watermelon, it can take between 70 and 100 days to go from planting to harvest.

Read Next

- [Starting Seeds Indoors: How and When to Start Seeds](#)
- [How to Grow Tomato Plants: The Complete Guide](#)
- [Growing Melons in the Garden](#)

PLANTING

When to Plant Watermelons

Plan to transplant seedlings into the garden about 2 weeks after that date or when the soil has warmed to at least 65°F (18°C).

- In warmer climates with long growing seasons, sow seeds directly outdoors 1 to 2 weeks after your last frost date, as long as the soil temperature has warmed to at least 65°F (18°C).
- Young watermelon plants can also be bought from nurseries. Plant these after there is no longer a chance of frost; they are very tender. Watch the local forecast and err on the side of caution! Consider laying black plastic over your planting area to warm the soil even more.
- **Tip:** Starting with young plants can result in an earlier harvest (usually up to 2 weeks earlier), so consider buying young plants, particularly if you live in a

Choosing and Preparing a Planting Site

- Amend soil with aged manure, seaweed, and/or compost before planting. Watermelons are heavy feeders, meaning they need soil that is fertile and has a high nutrient level. Learn more about [soil amendments](#) and [preparing soil for planting](#).
- Watermelons do best in loamy, somewhat sandy, well-drained soil. They can struggle in soil that contains too much clay and doesn't drain well.
- Watermelons prefer a [soil pH](#) between 6.0 and 7.5 ("slightly acidic to neutral").
- Watermelons need A LOT of space—up to 20 square feet per plant. Their vines need room to sprawl, so plant them in a place where they won't crowd out other crops.
- Growing the vines in raised rows,

drainage and will hold the sun's heat longer.

- Plan to space the plants 2-3 feet apart in a 5-foot-wide hill.
- If you're growing in traditional rows, space them at least 6 feet apart.



How to Plant Watermelons

- Sow seeds 1/2 to 1 inch deep outdoors or 1/4 to 1/2 inch deep in seed-starting pots indoors.
 - **Tip:** To allow for more root growth, use larger starting pots than you would for most seeds. Also, consider using compostable pots that can be cut

risk of damaging seedlings' tender roots during transplanting.

- If direct seeding outdoors, sow 4 to 6 seeds per hill, eventually thinning to 2 to 3 seedlings.

Transplanting Seedlings

- Handle watermelon seedlings with extreme care when you transplant. Their roots are very fragile, so try not to disturb the soil when removing them from pots.
- After transplanting, cover the plants with row covers to keep pests at bay. Remember to remove the row covers when you see both male and female flowers on the vine, as pollinators will need to access the flowers.
- Find even more [tips for planting melons](#) in your home garden.

GROWING

Watering Watermelons

- Watering is very important—from planting until fruit begins to form. While melon plants are growing, blooming, and setting fruit, they need 1 to 2 inches of water per week.
- Keep soil moist, but not waterlogged. Water at the vine's base in the morning, and try to avoid wetting the leaves and avoid overhead watering. Reduce watering once fruit are growing. Dry weather produces the sweetest melon.

Fertilizing

- If you choose to fertilize (and many do), make sure it delivers more nitrogen than phosphorus and potassium, as this will encourage leaf and vine growth. However, after flowering begins, use a fertilizer with less nitrogen to instead encourage flowers and fruit. We like to use a seaweed-based fertilizer.

- Vines produce male and female flowers separately on the same plant. They often begin producing male flowers several weeks before the females appear. Do not be concerned if the male flowers fall off. The female flowers (which have a swollen bulb at the base) will stay on the vine and bear fruit.
- Blossoms require pollination to set fruit, so be kind to the bees! [Learn how to support pollinators in your garden.](#)
- As the fruit is ripening, prevent rotting by gently lifting it and putting cardboard or straw between the fruit and the soil.



- Mulching with black plastic or straw around the plants will serve multiple purposes: it will warm the soil, hinder weed growth, and keep developing fruits off the soil.
- Pruning generally isn't necessary for watermelon plants, but vine productivity may be improved if you do not allow lateral (side) vines to grow and stick to the main vine. When the plant is young, just cut off the end buds as they form (before the side shoots become vines). You can also pinch off some blossoms to focus the energy on fewer melons (though it's challenging to kill off a potential fruit).

Types

- **'Sugar Baby'**: 80 days to maturity. Produces 10-pound melons with bright red flesh. This variety of smaller fruit can be planted just 4 feet apart.
- **'Sweet Beauty'**: 80 days to maturity.

6-pound, oblong melons with red flesh.

- **‘Golden Midget’**: 70 days to maturity. Bears petite, yellow-skinned 3-pound melons with pink flesh. Good for Northern gardeners.

HARVESTING

Watermelons don't continue ripening after they are picked, so harvest time is important. They generally ripen over a two-week period, so keep your eye on them.

How to Tell If a Watermelon Is Ripe

Dr. Bill Rhodes, professor of horticulture at Clemson University, offers the following advice on how to tell when watermelons are ripe:

- Thump it. If the watermelon sounds

1. 11 - 12 - 13 - 14 - 15 - 16 - 17 - 18 - 19 - 20 - 21 - 22 - 23 - 24 - 25 - 26 - 27 - 28 - 29 - 30 - 31 - 32 - 33 - 34 - 35 - 36 - 37 - 38 - 39 - 40 - 41 - 42 - 43 - 44 - 45 - 46 - 47 - 48 - 49 - 50 - 51 - 52 - 53 - 54 - 55 - 56 - 57 - 58 - 59 - 60 - 61 - 62 - 63 - 64 - 65 - 66 - 67 - 68 - 69 - 70 - 71 - 72 - 73 - 74 - 75 - 76 - 77 - 78 - 79 - 80 - 81 - 82 - 83 - 84 - 85 - 86 - 87 - 88 - 89 - 90 - 91 - 92 - 93 - 94 - 95 - 96 - 97 - 98 - 99 - 100 - 101 - 102 - 103 - 104 - 105 - 106 - 107 - 108 - 109 - 110 - 111 - 112 - 113 - 114 - 115 - 116 - 117 - 118 - 119 - 120 - 121 - 122 - 123 - 124 - 125 - 126 - 127 - 128 - 129 - 130 - 131 - 132 - 133 - 134 - 135 - 136 - 137 - 138 - 139 - 140 - 141 - 142 - 143 - 144 - 145 - 146 - 147 - 148 - 149 - 150 - 151 - 152 - 153 - 154 - 155 - 156 - 157 - 158 - 159 - 160 - 161 - 162 - 163 - 164 - 165 - 166 - 167 - 168 - 169 - 170 - 171 - 172 - 173 - 174 - 175 - 176 - 177 - 178 - 179 - 180 - 181 - 182 - 183 - 184 - 185 - 186 - 187 - 188 - 189 - 190 - 191 - 192 - 193 - 194 - 195 - 196 - 197 - 198 - 199 - 200 - 201 - 202 - 203 - 204 - 205 - 206 - 207 - 208 - 209 - 210 - 211 - 212 - 213 - 214 - 215 - 216 - 217 - 218 - 219 - 220 - 221 - 222 - 223 - 224 - 225 - 226 - 227 - 228 - 229 - 230 - 231 - 232 - 233 - 234 - 235 - 236 - 237 - 238 - 239 - 240 - 241 - 242 - 243 - 244 - 245 - 246 - 247 - 248 - 249 - 250 - 251 - 252 - 253 - 254 - 255 - 256 - 257 - 258 - 259 - 260 - 261 - 262 - 263 - 264 - 265 - 266 - 267 - 268 - 269 - 270 - 271 - 272 - 273 - 274 - 275 - 276 - 277 - 278 - 279 - 280 - 281 - 282 - 283 - 284 - 285 - 286 - 287 - 288 - 289 - 290 - 291 - 292 - 293 - 294 - 295 - 296 - 297 - 298 - 299 - 300 - 301 - 302 - 303 - 304 - 305 - 306 - 307 - 308 - 309 - 310 - 311 - 312 - 313 - 314 - 315 - 316 - 317 - 318 - 319 - 320 - 321 - 322 - 323 - 324 - 325 - 326 - 327 - 328 - 329 - 330 - 331 - 332 - 333 - 334 - 335 - 336 - 337 - 338 - 339 - 340 - 341 - 342 - 343 - 344 - 345 - 346 - 347 - 348 - 349 - 350 - 351 - 352 - 353 - 354 - 355 - 356 - 357 - 358 - 359 - 360 - 361 - 362 - 363 - 364 - 365 - 366 - 367 - 368 - 369 - 370 - 371 - 372 - 373 - 374 - 375 - 376 - 377 - 378 - 379 - 380 - 381 - 382 - 383 - 384 - 385 - 386 - 387 - 388 - 389 - 390 - 391 - 392 - 393 - 394 - 395 - 396 - 397 - 398 - 399 - 400 - 401 - 402 - 403 - 404 - 405 - 406 - 407 - 408 - 409 - 410 - 411 - 412 - 413 - 414 - 415 - 416 - 417 - 418 - 419 - 420 - 421 - 422 - 423 - 424 - 425 - 426 - 427 - 428 - 429 - 430 - 431 - 432 - 433 - 434 - 435 - 436 - 437 - 438 - 439 - 440 - 441 - 442 - 443 - 444 - 445 - 446 - 447 - 448 - 449 - 450 - 451 - 452 - 453 - 454 - 455 - 456 - 457 - 458 - 459 - 460 - 461 - 462 - 463 - 464 - 465 - 466 - 467 - 468 - 469 - 470 - 471 - 472 - 473 - 474 - 475 - 476 - 477 - 478 - 479 - 480 - 481 - 482 - 483 - 484 - 485 - 486 - 487 - 488 - 489 - 490 - 491 - 492 - 493 - 494 - 495 - 496 - 497 - 498 - 499 - 500 - 501 - 502 - 503 - 504 - 505 - 506 - 507 - 508 - 509 - 510 - 511 - 512 - 513 - 514 - 515 - 516 - 517 - 518 - 519 - 520 - 521 - 522 - 523 - 524 - 525 - 526 - 527 - 528 - 529 - 530 - 531 - 532 - 533 - 534 - 535 - 536 - 537 - 538 - 539 - 540 - 541 - 542 - 543 - 544 - 545 - 546 - 547 - 548 - 549 - 550 - 551 - 552 - 553 - 554 - 555 - 556 - 557 - 558 - 559 - 560 - 561 - 562 - 563 - 564 - 565 - 566 - 567 - 568 - 569 - 570 - 571 - 572 - 573 - 574 - 575 - 576 - 577 - 578 - 579 - 580 - 581 - 582 - 583 - 584 - 585 - 586 - 587 - 588 - 589 - 590 - 591 - 592 - 593 - 594 - 595 - 596 - 597 - 598 - 599 - 600 - 601 - 602 - 603 - 604 - 605 - 606 - 607 - 608 - 609 - 610 - 611 - 612 - 613 - 614 - 615 - 616 - 617 - 618 - 619 - 620 - 621 - 622 - 623 - 624 - 625 - 626 - 627 - 628 - 629 - 630 - 631 - 632 - 633 - 634 - 635 - 636 - 637 - 638 - 639 - 640 - 641 - 642 - 643 - 644 - 645 - 646 - 647 - 648 - 649 - 650 - 651 - 652 - 653 - 654 - 655 - 656 - 657 - 658 - 659 - 660 - 661 - 662 - 663 - 664 - 665 - 666 - 667 - 668 - 669 - 670 - 671 - 672 - 673 - 674 - 675 - 676 - 677 - 678 - 679 - 680 - 681 - 682 - 683 - 684 - 685 - 686 - 687 - 688 - 689 - 690 - 691 - 692 - 693 - 694 - 695 - 696 - 697 - 698 - 699 - 700 - 701 - 702 - 703 - 704 - 705 - 706 - 707 - 708 - 709 - 710 - 711 - 712 - 713 - 714 - 715 - 716 - 717 - 718 - 719 - 720 - 721 - 722 - 723 - 724 - 725 - 726 - 727 - 728 - 729 - 730 - 731 - 732 - 733 - 734 - 735 - 736 - 737 - 738 - 739 - 740 - 741 - 742 - 743 - 744 - 745 - 746 - 747 - 748 - 749 - 750 - 751 - 752 - 753 - 754 - 755 - 756 - 757 - 758 - 759 - 760 - 761 - 762 - 763 - 764 - 765 - 766 - 767 - 768 - 769 - 770 - 771 - 772 - 773 - 774 - 775 - 776 - 777 - 778 - 779 - 780 - 781 - 782 - 783 - 784 - 785 - 786 - 787 - 788 - 789 - 790 - 791 - 792 - 793 - 794 - 795 - 796 - 797 - 798 - 799 - 800 - 801 - 802 - 803 - 804 - 805 - 806 - 807 - 808 - 809 - 810 - 811 - 812 - 813 - 814 - 815 - 816 - 817 - 818 - 819 - 820 - 821 - 822 - 823 - 824 - 825 - 826 - 827 - 828 - 829 - 830 - 831 - 832 - 833 - 834 - 835 - 836 - 837 - 838 - 839 - 840 - 841 - 842 - 843 - 844 - 845 - 846 - 847 - 848 - 849 - 850 - 851 - 852 - 853 - 854 - 855 - 856 - 857 - 858 - 859 - 860 - 861 - 862 - 863 - 864 - 865 - 866 - 867 - 868 - 869 - 870 - 871 - 872 - 873 - 874 - 875 - 876 - 877 - 878 - 879 - 880 - 881 - 882 - 883 - 884 - 885 - 886 - 887 - 888 - 889 - 890 - 891 - 892 - 893 - 894 - 895 - 896 - 897 - 898 - 899 - 900 - 901 - 902 - 903 - 904 - 905 - 906 - 907 - 908 - 909 - 910 - 911 - 912 - 913 - 914 - 915 - 916 - 917 - 918 - 919 - 920 - 921 - 922 - 923 - 924 - 925 - 926 - 927 - 928 - 929 - 930 - 931 - 932 - 933 - 934 - 935 - 936 - 937 - 938 - 939 - 940 - 941 - 942 - 943 - 944 - 945 - 946 - 947 - 948 - 949 - 950 - 951 - 952 - 953 - 954 - 955 - 956 - 957 - 958 - 959 - 960 - 961 - 962 - 963 - 964 - 965 - 966 - 967 - 968 - 969 - 970 - 971 - 972 - 973 - 974 - 975 - 976 - 977 - 978 - 979 - 980 - 981 - 982 - 983 - 984 - 985 - 986 - 987 - 988 - 989 - 990 - 991 - 992 - 993 - 994 - 995 - 996 - 997 - 998 - 999 - 1000

little contrast between the stripes.

- Look at the color on the bottom. An immature watermelon will have a white bottom; a ripe melon will have a cream- or yellow-colored bottom.
- Press on it. If the watermelon sounds like it gives a little, it's ripe. (Note: Rhodes doesn't like this method because it can ruin the quality of the fruit.)
- Check the tendril. If it's green, wait. If it's half-dead, the watermelon is nearly ripe or ripe. If the tendril is fully dead, it's ripe or overripe; it's not going to get any riper, so you might as well pick!
- Stems should be cut with a sharp knife close to the fruit.

Check out these tips for more ways to [tell if a watermelon is ripe](#).

How to Store Watermelons

last in the refrigerator for about 4 days. Wrap tightly in plastic.

GARDENING PRODUCTS

		
Vegetabl...	Housepla...	All Purpo...
\$8.99	\$9.99	\$8.79
<input type="button" value="BUY NOW"/>	<input type="button" value="BUY NOW"/>	<input type="button" value="BUY NOW"/>

PESTS/DISEASES

- [Aphids](#)
- [Blossom-End Rot](#)
- [Cucumber Beetles](#)
- [Squash Vine Borer Moths](#)
- [Fusarium Wilt](#)

- What's in a name? Watermelons are 90% water.
- *The pumpkin vine never bears watermelons.*
- August 3 is [National Watermelon Day](#) (U.S.)!

RECIPES

**AWARD-WINNING PICKLED
WATERMELON RINDS**

**WATERMELON BARBECUE
MARINADE**

**WATERMELON CUCUMBER
SALAD**

WATERMELON PUNCH

**WATERMELON BASKET WITH
HONEY LIME DRESSING**

FRUIT

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Catherine Boeckmann



Catherine Boeckmann loves nature, stargazing, and gardening so it's not surprising that she and The Old Farmer's Almanac found each other. She leads digital content for the Almanac website, and is also a certified master gardener in the state of Indiana. [Read More from Catherine Boeckmann](#)

MORE LIKE THIS



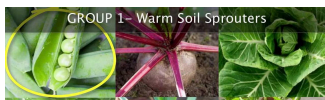
**Starting
Seeds
Indoors: How
and When to
Start Seeds**



**How to Grow
Tomato
Plants: The
Complete
Guide**



**Growing
Melons in the
Garden**



**Fall Vegetable
Garden
Planning:
Choosing the
Best Plants
for Autumn
Growing**

**Understandin
g When to
Plant
Vegetables**

**How to Grow
Garlic: The
Complete
Guide**



GROW YOUR BEST GARDEN YET

Join The Old Farmer's Almanac
Gardening Club Today!

LEARN MORE

ADVERTISEMENT

COMMENTS

ADD A COMMENT

Vitagbo Sampso... (not verified)12 months ago

I like water melon farming

How can I get market for the products if I engage in water melon farming?

ADVERTISEMENT

REPLY

Gary (not verified)1 year 9 months ago

Around here in the Deep South watermelon season usually winds down around July 4th.

I've never heard of August 3rd being National Watermelon Day. There are still watermelons to be bought but August is just too late for eating old melons.

REPLY

What I have learned growing watermelon...don't buy plantlings. Watermelons do not like to be messed with once they start growing and very rarely get all the water they need causing stress from the beginning. Don't bother with seed starting. See above and also they tend to develop root rot easily. Dig a shovel deep hole. put in good compost or aged manure, cover with good dirt, make a mound, drop in 5 seeds, cover with more dirt, pat down and water gently but thoroughly. Don't let the mound dry out, don't move the long vines. You can move the new ones out of your way. Don't worry about weeds or grass, none of that will bother the melons and the more cover they have the more likely they will grow. Know your zone. My zone is 7b. It makes a big difference. Know your area. A small part seems to be in a dip and will have problems with light freezes. I found this works with all melons. Plant well , water a lot and leave the heck alone.



Lee Speelmon (not verified) 3 years 8 months ago

Each summer I take a STRAIGHT straw from a straw broom about 4 to 5 inches long and carry it in my pocket notebook which I use to check ripeness. I set the melon level and lay the straw across it on the highest part of the melon. The straw will try to turn the length of the melon. The more it turns the riper the melon. It has to do with the water content. The higher the water content , the riper the melon. It has worked for 50 plus years. Watch out for any breeze.

REPLY

Gary Little (not verified) 3 years 8 months ago

When we we raided watermelon patches in high school we learned to thump them:
An echo sound or hollow sound not ripe.
A solid thump sound meant ripe.
It works with this thump test even in the

true results). I thump with 2nd or long
finger)

REPLY

jen (not verified) 1 year 11
months ago

thats actually quite the opposite.
if it sounds hollow, its ripe!

REPLY

Tammie (not verified) 3 years 9 months
ago

Kathy, it sounds like you may be describing
Black Diamond watermelons. They were
common in Texas when I was growing up.
Not so common now. Seedless watermelons
sound like a good idea, but have ruined the
watermelon experience. Today's kids have
no memories of what a really sweet water-
melon tastes like, or of seed spitting
contests

REPLY

Josh (not verified) 4 years 3 months ago

Here are the temperature requirements in watermelon farming

The temperature requirement for watermelon germination is between 26°C -33°C, with night temperature expected not to be lower than 25.

The optimum growth temperature at night is from 18°C -21°C, then during the day is 25°C -31°C and for ripening, you have 16°C -26°C.

REPLY

Will (not verified) 4 years 4 months ago

Hi Kathy, I was wondering did you receive a answer on your quest for sweet water mel-

...that you ask for comment to #12

[REPLY](#)

kathy taylor (not verified) 4 years 7 months ago

I want to find a watermelon that i grew up on before they started this seedless no taste watermelon .. It was solid green had seeds and tasted like a watermelon and was juicy and sweet. I grew up in the fifties.. Have only had a few watermelons over the years since seedless that actually tasted good.. Want to grow my own next year. What melon is that

[REPLY](#)[MORE COMMENTS](#)

THE OLD
FARMER'S STORE



The Old Farmer's Almanac Garden Journal

WHEN THE BLOSSOMS BLOOM

\$15.95

BUY NOW



Wooly Hand Duster with Teles...

\$31.95

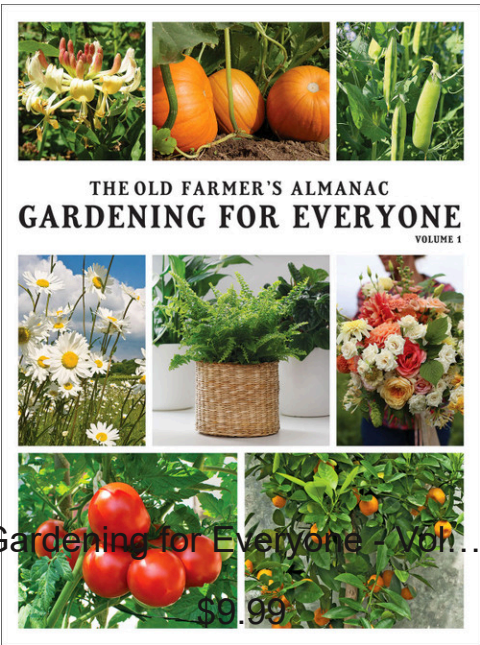
BUY NOW



Big Wooly Dust Mop with Tele...

\$49.95

BUY NOW



Gardening for Everyone - Voh...

BUY NOW

ADVERTISEMENT

Our Brands

[The Old Farmer's
Almanac for Kids](#)

[Yankee Magazine](#)

[Family Tree
Magazine](#)

[NH Business
Review](#)

[New Hampshire
Magazine](#)

[Yankee Custom
Marketing](#)

Resources

[About Us](#)

[Contact Us](#)

[Free Daily](#)

[Newsletter](#)

[Webcam](#)

[Advertise with Us](#)

[Media Relations](#)

[Sell the Almanac](#)

[Where to Buy](#)

[Terms of Use](#)

[Privacy Policy](#)

[Cookie List](#)

[Do Not Sell or](#)

[Share My Personal
Information](#)

Connect with Us



©2025 [Yankee Publishing Inc.](#), An Employee-Owned Company

1121 Main Street | P.O. Box 520 | Dublin, NH 03444