

L-760

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## ***Dulce Cantaloupe***

- Adapted to late spring and summer growing conditions in Texas
- Strong seedling and vigorous vines
- Downy mildew resistant
- Powdery mildew resistant
- Fruit rind rot resistant
- Good external fruit appearance
- Tolerant to fruit rind black mold
- Good shipping quality
- Well-netted, hard-rind fruits
- Medium size and dry shallow stem scars
- Excellent flesh flavor and sweetness
- Fruits slightly colored before maturity
- Seed available spring 1969

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# *Dulce Cantaloupe*

Production of late spring and summer cantaloupes in South Texas has been limited in the past by the lack of varieties that possess strong vines with acceptable yields of well-netted fruit with good quality.

Dulce is a downy mildew and powdery mildew-resistant variety adapted for production in South Texas, where weather conditions are highly favorable for these diseases. The external fruit appearance compares with the Perlita variety and has demonstrated excellent shipping quality.

## *History and Description*

Dulce originated from a cross between TP 59-17, a Weslaco breeding line, and the variety, Wescan, made at the Lower Rio Grande Valley Research and Extension Center in Weslaco during the spring of 1960. Dulce was self-pollinated, selected and propagated for eight generations. A high degree of resistance or near immunity to powdery mildew was attained by the fall of 1965. A seed crop of this selection was grown in the greenhouse in the presence of heavy powdery mildew infection in the spring of 1966, and no colony of powdery infection was observed. Two succeeding seed crop generations were bulk-seeded and evaluated in a small commercial planting during the spring of 1967.

Dulce produces a strong young seedling, which grows to a medium to large vine, highly resistant to downy mildew, powdery mildew and crown blight. It is about 7-10 days later in fruit maturity when compared to Perlita. Dulce produces oval-round shape, medium to large fruits (36s-27s) that are well netted, free of bare sutures, and hard-rind. In the pre-slip stage, the fruits often exhibit a light yellow-orange rind color several days before reaching the full-slip maturity stage. The stem scar is dry, medium size and shallow depth. The internal fruit flesh is firm, deep, dark salmon

colored, sweet (14 percent soluble solids) with an excellent cantaloupe flavor. The seed cavity is compact and relatively dry. Mature fruits are less subject to fruit rind black mold than Perlita under prolonged rainy conditions. Dulce is resistant to stem-end cracks and fruit rind rot caused by extremely wet soil during the fruit maturity period.

### *Performance and Adaptation*

Dulce and its prevarietal selections have been evaluated in the state-federal cooperative trials each spring since 1962. Four acres of Dulce were evaluated in a commercial planting during the spring of 1967. Area melon growers were pleased with the mildew resistance, production, fruit sizes, external appearance and internal quality of Dulce. Compared with the Perlita variety, Dulce produces a stronger seedling, larger vine, medium-size fruits (36s-27s), higher and more uniformly distributed net, harder fruit rind, deeper and darker salmon colored flesh, sweeter and more highly-flavored flesh and a more highly-colored matured fruit. Dulce is better adapted to late spring and summer production than Perlita, apparently because of its vigorous vine growth. A small block of Dulce planted in a summer trial produced high quality fruits late July and early August.

This new variety has been evaluated in different locations in Texas where cantaloupes are grown commercially. In areas where downy mildew and/or powdery mildew have been limiting production factors, Dulce has produced good quality fruits.

### *Limitations*

Dulce does not resist *Alternaria* leafspot or gummy stem blight. Because of its vigorous vine growth, Dulce should not be planted in double rows. In single row planting, the in-row planting spacing should be from 16-20 inches between single plants. Since Dulce was developed for late spring and summer production in South Texas, it should be planted March 15-May 1. If this variety is planted earlier, it will produce small coarsely-netted fruits.

## *Sources of Seeds*

Foundation seed stocks of Dulce were released to certified seed growers during the spring of 1968. A limited amount of seed for commercial growers should be available through local seedsmen in the spring of 1969.



This is one of a number of new or improved varieties or hybrids of field and horticultural crops developed by the Texas Agricultural Experiment Station. Similar leaflets are published when seed of new varieties or hybrids become available.