

2004 Home Demonstration Gardens

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Introduction

Home demonstration gardens were located at ten sites across the state. The theme was a garden for the birds and included beets, baking potatoes, slicing cucumbers, and a hybrid super sweet corn. Many varieties of annual vinca and sunflowers were also grown.

Materials and Methods

Most seedlings were grown in the ISU horticulture greenhouses in Ames, Iowa. The transplants were transported and planted at research farms by the end of May. Potato seed pieces and beet seeds were planted directly in each garden in mid-April. Super sweet corn varieties, cleome, safflower, millet, and sorghum were direct seeded into each garden in May. A second planting of sweet corn occurred approximately 2–3 weeks after the first sowing.

Limited fertilizer and pesticides were used. Plants were watered at planting and then as needed throughout the growing season.

Nine different flowers were grown for the gardens for the birds. Also included were 12 cultivars of sunflowers. Transplants of five vinca and slicing cucumber cultivars, eight cultivars of baking potatoes and beets, and six cultivars of super or “triple” sweet corn were grown at each participating farm.

Results and Discussion

Due to the cool spring weather, many of the vegetable and flower varieties were slow to establish themselves. Seeds of sorghum, safflower, cleome, and millet germinated poorly at several farms. The cool temperatures also contributed to the late harvest of sweet corn varieties.

Vegetables. The potato varieties grown included Superior, Caribe, Viking Red, Island Sunshine, Red Gold, Red Lasota, Carola (Carole), and Russian Banana. All potato varieties produced sizable tubers at each farm. Yield data for the Armstrong Farm is presented in Table 1. Cultivars that produced well included Superior, Red Gold, Carola, Red Lasota, Viking Red, and Russian Banana.

Cucumbers were also productive at most farms. The cultivars grown included Sweet Slice, Thunder, General Lee, Fanfare, Diva, and at a few farms Cobra. While Fanfare and Thunder were the most productive at the Northeast Farm (Table 2), many field day attendees preferred the taste of the newer cultivars of Sweet Slice or Diva.

Data were not collected on the beets or sweet corn grown at each farm. Beet cultivars grown were Cylindra, Egyptian Flat, Burpee’s Golden, Detroit Dark Red, Ruby Queen, Bull’s Blood, Blankoma White, and Chioggia. All beet cultivars were productive with the exception of Burpee’s Golden, which germinated poorly at several farms. Informal taste tests conducted during field days noted that Chioggia, Blankoma White, Detroit Dark Red, and Burpee’s Golden were popular varieties.

Super sweet corn cultivars grown included Avalon, Honey Select, Serendipity, Nantasket, Providence, and Cinderella. All are triple sweet hybrid varieties new to the market. Unfortunately, all were also harvested late in the season. Informal taste tests at one research farm were highly variable and no single cultivar was preferred.

Flowers. The sunflower cultivars grown were Joker, Italian White, Starburst Lemon Aurora, Giant Sungold, Moulin Rouge, Tiffany, Claret, Soraya, Valentine, Ring of Fire, Ruby Moon,

and Stella Gold. All sunflower cultivars performed beautifully at each garden except Stella Gold and Giant Sungold, which were late in producing flowers.

The vinca series grown at each garden included Cooler, Heatwave, Pacifica, Merry-Go-Round,

and Mediterranean. All were equally beautiful and bloomed repeatedly throughout the summer.

Acknowledgments

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Table 1. Comparison of different baking potato cultivars grown at Armstrong Research and Demonstration Farm in Lewis, Iowa.

Variety	Total yield (pounds)*	Season	Comments
Superior	13.3	Early	Medium size, tan skin, white flesh, shallow eyes
Red Lasota	24.4	Mid	Large size, red skin, white flesh, deep eyes
Red Gold	21.2	Mid	Medium-large size, red skin, yellow flesh, shallow eyes
Russian Banana	16.2	Late	Small "finger shaped," brown skin, yellow flesh
Island Sunshine	14.4	Mid	Small-medium size, tan skin, yellow flesh
Viking Red	29.9	Mid	Large size, red skin, white flesh, shallow eyes
Caribe	13.5	Early	Large elongated shape, purple skin, white flesh
Carola	27.8	Late	Medium size, elongated shape, tan skin, yellow flesh, shallow eyes

*Per 10-foot row.

Table 2. Comparison of different slicing cucumbers grown at Northeast Research and Demonstration Farm in Nashua, Iowa.

Variety	Number of plants	Total number of fruit	Total weight (pounds)	Average fruit weight (pounds)
Sweet Slice	4	243	95.9	.39
Thunder	9	666	220.95	.33
General Lee	9	593	174.46	.29
Diva	9	364	86.0	.24
Fanfare	9	673	195.37	.29
Cobra	3	156	51.76	.33