

All-America Selections Vegetable Trial

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All-America Selections® (AAS) is an independent, non-profit organization established in 1932 by industry leaders to organize and oversee unbiased evaluations of new, soon to be released flower and vegetable varieties. The goal of the AAS is to identify truly improved home garden varieties through a national network of trial grounds and then promote these proven winners as All-America Selections®.

There are several AAS vegetable trial sites across the country hosted by universities, seed companies, and other public gardens. AAS requires all trial sites to have a knowledgeable judge to evaluate entrants in blind tests (seed sources are unknown to judges) on several traits including earliness, yield, taste, disease resistance, and shelf life. AAS winners are selected by receiving high ratings at all trialing locations.

The 2008 AAS Vegetable Trial evaluated five entrants:

1. A paprika type pepper with early maturity and dry down.
2. A “Cajun” flavored small bell pepper with disease resistance.
3. A yellow cherry tomato with oval fruit weighing 1 ounce.
4. A hybrid pumpkin with 7 lb fruit.
5. A diploid hybrid watermelon with oblong striped fruit and red flesh.

Each entrant was grown in replicated plots with at least two other established, similar varieties for comparison. Common cultural practices were followed including irrigation and pest control as needed. All of the 2008 entrants performed well and received ratings that were equal to their comparisons, but usually no better. Only the pumpkin entry was judged to have improved traits over its comparisons. It produced a high yield of uniformly attractive, 4.0 to 7.5 lb dark orange pumpkins. However, it had vigorous plants that grew long vines, which might be objectionable in some gardens with limited space. Our ratings were submitted to the AAS national governing body, which will consider scores from all trialing locations and make a determination on whether entries are dropped from the trials, retested, or given the AAS Award.

The 2009 AAS vegetable winners have been announced and include *Gretel* eggplant, *Lambkin* melon, and *Honey Bear* squash. These winners have been tested at Muscatine and have shown superior characteristics. *Gretel* is a quick growing eggplant that will produce glossy white mini fruit that are tender and sweet. It is readily adaptable to container gardening because of its small size. *Honey Bear* acorn squash is ideal for gardens with its compact plant size and strong powdery mildew tolerance. *Lambkin* is an interesting Piel de Sapo type melon with vigorous vines, high yield and unique fruit that store well.

For more information and a list of recent AAS Winners with pictures and full descriptions, visit www.aaswinners.com.