

Bitter Melon

Momordica charantia (Cucurbitaceae)

Fast facts:

Acres in Washington: less than 50 acres Number of Growers: less than 50
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Description Of crop:

Bitter melon comes in a variety of shapes and sizes. Bitter melon is an annual vine that can grow to more than 10 feet long. Its fruit is 4 to 8 inches long and green when immature. When ripe, bitter melon is orange. The fruit is used when green and starting to turn yellow. It is used as a vegetable and the young shoots, leaves and flowers are commonly used in Asian and East Indian cooking. Bitter melon is also used in various Asian cultures for medicinal use. It is thought to be a cure for such ailments as high blood pressure and diabetes. In Washington, bitter melon is produced in small quantities for consumption by local Asian communities. Cultural practices and pest problems are similar to other cucurbits, such as squash and cucumber.

Key pests:

Foliage pests and diseases are usually not a problem in bitter melon due to toxic compounds present in the plant. Occasionally aphids can be a problem. Weeds are generally not a problem once the vine is trained to poles and trellised.

Key pesticides:

Aphids can be controlled with insecticidal soaps. Weeds can be hand hoed or backpack sprayed with Roundup in early spring.

Critical pest

Control issues:

Aphid populations should be controlled when their numbers increase. Black plastic can also provide weed control on the beds.

Expert contacts:

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Location of Production:

In Eastern Washington: Yakima County. In Western Washington: Whatcom, Skagit, Snohomish, King and Pierce Counties

Pictures:



Bitter Melon (*Wikipedia*)

