

Celery

Apium graveolens (Umbelliferae)

Fast Facts: Acres in Washington: 100
Number of Growers: 40-50
Per Acre Value: \$12.70 \$14/cwt
Percent of U.S. Acreage: less than 1%

Description Of crop:

Celery is from the same plant as carrots, parsley, fennel and caraway. It is a cool-season biennial grown as an annual. It requires a longer growing season and needs lots of water. Celery leaves rise from a crown at ground level. It grows in bunches of long ribbed stalks with leafy tops. Leaf stems are up to a foot long, with the greatly compound leaf blades extending an additional foot during growth. Outer leaves develop first and are a larger size than the smaller inner leaves. Celery hearts are the inner ribs of the celery plants.

Celery is planted with a high density per acre in 22-inch rows, nine inches apart. The crop is planted from transplants into the field starting in late May.

Planting continues through mid-July to ensure a long harvest from late August to

mid-October. Harvesting occurs when most of the celery in a field is uniform and reaches a marketable size. There are two main varieties of celery grown today. The commercial production of celery is dominated by a pale green variety called Pascal celery. The other variety, Golden celery, is grown under a layer of soil to prevent it from developing and turning green. Gardeners can grow a range of cultivars, many of which differ little from the wild species of celery. These are ranged under two classes, white and red; the white cultivars are generally the best flavored and the most crisp and tender. The wild form of celery is known as

“smallage” and has a furrowed stalk with wedge-shaped leaves. It grows wild in wet places, has a bitter taste and the stalks are stringier than cultivated celery.

Smallage was used in ancient times as a medicine.

During 2007, U.S. consumers used about 1.9 billion pounds of celery. Most U.S. celery is sold in the fresh market but a portion is processed for use in prepared foods such as soups, juices and convenience dinners. Celery is usually eaten raw or sliced and cooked as an ingredient in soup and stew dishes. It is also a critical component in many ethnic dishes such as Creole cooking. The root can also be used as a flavoring or can be cooked. Many people enjoy celery

though a small minority can have a severe allergic reaction to it. The allergen doesn't appear to be destroyed through cooking temperatures. In Washington, celery is grown for local fresh markets only on small acreage.

Key pests:

Weeds are a pest in celery production and include: lambsquarter, kochia, pigweed, chickweed, smartweed, Canada thistle, mayweed, Russian thistle and barnyard grasses. Insect pests of celery include the green peach aphid, bean aphid and the carrot rust fly. The main diseases of celery are blackheart disease and powdery mildew.

Key pesticides:

Weeds are controlled with Lorox, Treflan, or Poast. Weeds control should be supplemented with multiple cultivations and hand hoeing at least once a season. Growers can control aphids with Assail or Admire. The carrot rust fly is controlled with diazinon and is usually more of a problem on the west side of the state. Blackheart is caused by a calcium deficiency within the plant. Symptoms start with water soaked tips on leaves. Growers can control blackheart by applying calcium rich fertilizers, such as bone meal, blood meal, or calcium sprays to the soil. Powdery mildew is controlled with Amistar.

Critical pest

Control issues:

Growers should be careful when spraying that they don't destroy the aphid's natural parasitic enemies, which include ladybird beetles, lacewings and the syrphid fly. Any infested crop material should be destroyed to prevent the spread of disease.

Expert contacts: Dr. Carol Miles
WSU Mount Vernon NWREC
16650 State Route 536
Mount Vernon, Wa 98273
360 848 6120

Location

Of production:

Ferry, Franklin, Clark, Skagit, Jefferson, Pierce, San Juan, King, Thurston, Benton, Yakima, Walla Walla and Whatcom counties.



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Celery

Celery Production in Washington State

