

Watermelon



Seedless watermelon

FAES leased a tract of land near Leesburg, Florida in 1930 for watermelon research. Emphasis in the early years of the program was resistance to Fusarium wilt, and many crosses and selections were made with the objective of developing new, wilt-resistant varieties. One of the most successful crosses, **Hawkesbury**

Hawkesbury and Leesburg in their genealogy. Lines incorporating anthracnose and Fusarium wilt resistance were distributed widely to other breeders; hence, Florida lines are found in the genealogy of many of the watermelon varieties currently grown throughout the world.

WR x Leesburg, was made in 1936. Selections from this cross were made available to many watermelon breeders. One of the selections, designated **Florida Seedling 124**, has been recognized as the source of high-level resistance to wilt in **Calhoun Gray**, **Summit**, and **Calhoun Sweet**. Four other varieties with high-level resistance to wilt, **Smokylee**, **Verona**, **Whitehope**, and **Texas W5**, also have

From 1952 to 1961, evaluation of materials on hand from previous breeders and searches for accessions that might have value for future breeding purposes were principle activities. During this period, **Jubilee** was developed by J.M. Crall from selections made in soils heavily infested with the Fusarium wilt fungus, and it remained an important variety in the southeastern United States for over 30 years.

High-level wilt resistance was identified during the early 1960s in several varieties, and crosses were made to combine this resistance with anthracnose resistance (race 1) and other characters desirable in a high-quality, shipping-type watermelon. **Smokylee**, **Dixielee**, and **Sugarlee** resulted from this program.

Another facet of watermelon breeding was the development of small-fruited varieties, also called icebox watermelons, with round, gray, 8- to 15-pound fruit.

Mickylee and **Minilee** were introduced in 1986 by Crall from this program. **Mickylee** is still being grown 20 years later. A seedless (triploid) breeding program was initiated in 1985 by G.W. Elmstrom and culminated in the release of **Flordalee III** and **Merrilee III** in 1994.

Watermelon Varieties Developed by FAES

Type	Variety	Date of Release	Type	Variety	Date of Release
Diploids (Seeded)	Leesburg	1936	Diploids (cont.)	Sugarlee	1981
	Blacklee	1944		Charlee, Mickylee, Minilee	1986
	Ironsides	1950		Jubilee II	1990
	Jubilee	1963	Triploids (Seedless)	Flordalee III, Merrilee III	1994
	Smokylee	1971			
	Dixielee	1979			