



Tried and True Vegetables for Yolo County

Yolo County offers many advantages and a few disadvantages for vegetable gardeners. We have hot dry summers and heavy soils in some areas. On the other hand, our weather is moderate much of the year and those soils have a generous nutrient profile. This article will provide a list of some vegetables that UCCE Master Gardeners-Yolo have tried and recommend as well-suited to our climate and soils. Planting these should give you a fighting chance of success. And, of course, we hope you also branch out to try others that seem interesting and promising.

First, a few definitions. A *species* refers to what is commonly considered a “type” of vegetable. Tomatoes, whether the fruits are big or small, red or yellow, are all the same species *Solanum lycopersicum* with the first word being the genus and the second the particular species. Corn, whether it is a sweet white corn with five-foot stalks or 10-foot-tall yellow field corn is all the same genus and species, *Zea mays*.

The terms *variety* and *cultivar* on the other hand both refer to one of many expressions of a specific vegetable species. They have some key differences however.

A vegetable variety is one that occurred more or less naturally. It may have been selected by a vegetable breeder or maybe a backyard gardener. The key characteristic is that if you pollinate a vegetable variety with the same variety, the resulting seeds will develop plants that are the same as the parent plants. These are often referred to as open pollinated plants.

Heirloom varieties are open pollinated varieties that have been grown and maintained without hybridization for a relatively long period of time. Beyond that, there is no real agreement on the term. It has no scientific meaning and has become, more than anything, a marketing phrase.

A cultivar on the other hand refers to a plant that has been “cultivated” or created using one or more plant breeding techniques. This is generally done by a plant breeder selecting two plant lines, often open pollinated varieties, and then cross pollinating them to produce a new plant that has the desirable characteristics of both parents. The new plant line is called a hybrid. Sometimes the breeder will cross pollinate two hybrids to reach the ultimate goal. If you save and plant the seeds from a hybrid cultivar, the resulting plants will not be the same as the parent plant.

People have been intentionally creating hybrids at least since the Austrian Monk Gregor Mendel demonstrated the basic rules of plant heredity in the mid-19th century. Cross-pollination is a natural process that occurs within members of the same plant species. Hybrid

plants are not genetically modified or GMO plants which are created by modifying the genes in the plant. No GMO seeds are sold to the public.

Most vegetable seed companies use the designation “open pollinated” or OP and “hybrid” or H rather than the terms variety and cultivar. Both open pollinated and hybrid vegetables can have a place in a successful garden, and both have advantages and disadvantages.

Open pollinated varieties often have a relatively narrow range of climate and soils in which they will be most successful because they were often selected over time while grown in a limited geographic area. They may be prone to disease, especially diseases they did not face in their home habitat. Preserving the genetic diversity represented by open pollinated varieties is important however. It is often claimed that, especially with tomatoes, they have better flavor. That is not universally true. Sungold is a hybrid tomato that has often won tomato tastings. Roma, on the other hand, is an heirloom that has many good qualities, but complex flavor is not one of them. Iceberg lettuce is another heirloom that is not particularly distinguished for interest or flavor. Still, many open pollinated varieties have wonderful flavor and other qualities and deserve a place in your garden. You need to be careful in their selection however because not all are adapted to our climate, soils, insects, and diseases. If you save seeds, you should save open pollinated varieties since the offspring will be true to the parents.

Hybrid varieties are bred to have desirable qualities. They may be less prone to disease than most open pollinated varieties. They may grow with extra vigor and are often able to tolerate a wider variety of climates and soils than their open pollinated brethren. They often will produce more heavily and consistently. They may not have the complex flavor or interesting appearance of some of the open pollinated varieties. But when grown in your home garden, the flavor of most hybrids will far exceed supermarket offerings. They deserve to be included as dependable and productive contributors to your kitchen table. You should not save the seeds of hybrid varieties, unless you are a real gambler, since the offspring will not be the same as the parent.

The following list does not contain recommendations for the full range of vegetables that you can grow in Yolo County. It is limited to varieties and cultivars that Master Gardeners felt they had enough experience and success with to merit an endorsement. Not all these will be available in local nurseries as starts or even seeds. All are available as seeds through on-line retailers.

Recommended Vegetables

Asparagus (*Asparagus officinalis*)

Purple Passion (H) – thick, purple-colored spears, generally sweet and tender.

Artichoke (*Cynara cardunculus*)

Green globe (OP) – large “flower buds” produced over a long period of time. Will produce the first year when grown from seed in the late winter.

Beans – green (*Phaseolus vulgaris*)

Red Noodle (OP) - long, 18", heat tolerant, beautiful pole bean.

Romano (OP) – Italian style pole flat bean. Large pods are stringless. Roma is the bush bean version.

Yellow Wax (OP) – a bush bean with stringless yellow pods.

Yardlong (OP) – Long, thin Asian bean sometimes called asparagus bean. Holds up to heat well.

Gita Chinese Long Bean (OP) - Produces 16-20" long, dark green pods, no bigger than the diameter of a pencil that are string-less, sweet, and richly flavored.

Red Noodle (OP)- Eighteen-inch-long Chinese type pole bean. Heat tolerant.

Seychelles (OP) - Early and vigorous green snap pole bean. The pods are stringless and 5-6" long. Plants are resistant to bean mosaic virus and Anthracnose.

Fava Beans (*Vicia faba*)

Windsor (OP)- most common variety, very dependable.

Aprovecho (OP)- larger, more flavorful bean than Windsor.

Beets (*Beta vulgaris*)

Detroit Dark Red (OP) – Standard garden variety, uniform roots with strong healthy tops.

Chioggia (OP) – beets have alternating red and pink rings, good tops for greens.

Touchstone Gold (OP)- Yellow beet that retains its color when cooked. Excellent sweet flavor.

Bok choy -Pak choi (*Brassica rapa* subsp. *Chinensis*)

Canton White (OP) – Big leaves, good thick stems and more heat tolerant than many other varieties.

Broccoli (*Brassica oleracea* var. *italica*)

De Cicco (OP) – Medium sized heads but plants put out a lot of size shoots once the main head is harvested.

Waltham (OP) – Medium to large 5" heads with lots of side shoots. Very cold tolerant.

Calabrese (OP) - Produces a compact dark green central head, with many lateral or side shoots. Slow bolting with good flavor.

Imperial (H) – Medium sized heads, good heat tolerance makes it a good choice for late winter planting.

Carrots (*Daucus carota*)

Nantes (OP) – Dark orange color, 6-7” long carrots that like full sun. Can plant in early fall and keep through the winter.

King Midas (H) – Large deep orange carrot, 8-9” long.

Danvers Half Long (OP) - A bright orange carrot with a blunt end, performs well in heavy soils.

Cauliflower (*Brassica oleracea* var. *Botrytis*)

Cheddar (H)- Orange heads that hold up well.

Graffiti (H) – Bright purple heads that maintain their color when cooked.

Amazing (OP) – Old favorite with good leaf cover that does well in wet clay soil.

Chard, Swiss (*Beta vulgaris*)

Fordhook (OP) vigorous plant with large leaves and very thick stems

Bright Lights (OP)- individual stems are red, yellow, orange, gold, or white making a beautiful display in the garden or on the table.

Corn (*Zea mays*)

Golden Jubilee (H)- Six-foot-tall stalks produce 9” ears with yellow kernels. Best if eaten soon after picking.

Silver Queen (H)- Eight-inch ears have white, sweet kernels growing on 7’ stalks.

Sugar Buns (H)- Heavy producer of seven-inch ears on 7’ stalks. Smut resistant in our experience.

Cucumbers (*Cucumis sativus*)

Lemon (OP) – produces many round, yellow fruits.

Armenian (OP) – actually a melon, not a true cucumber but close enough- never bitter, will stay flavorful even when very large.

Summer Dance (H) – A Japanese type that produces lots of 9” fruits with good disease resistance.

Adams Gherkin (H)- Pickling cucumber, perfect size to fill a pint jar.

Sooyow Nishiki cucumber (OP) – This is a long, thin Japanese cucumber. It is sweet and crisp with a small seed cavity if harvested regularly.

Eggplant (*Solanum melongena*)

Traviata (H) – Classic glossy black bell-shaped eggplant with good flavor.

Orient Express (H) – early maturing Japanese style, long slender fruits with delicate flavor.

Shoya Long (H) – An extra-long Japanese type of eggplant, very productive.

Black Beauty (OP) – Large eggplant that grows dependably but later maturing and less productive than some other varieties.

Rose Bianca (OP) - Medium sized light pink fruit with white shading. Rich, mild flesh, not bitter.

Kamo (OP)- Round Japanese type eggplant, creamy texture, sprawling plant.

Nadia (H)- Large purple eggplant, very productive.

Garlic (*Allium sativum*)

Italian Late (OP) - A soft neck variety.

California Early and California Late- two soft neck varieties. (Note, hard neck varieties do not do well here because they need more chilling in the winter than we typically have.)

Ground Cherry (*Physalis spp.*)

Miss Molly (OP) – small tomatillo-like fruit that has a husk, very sweet, tastes like pineapple. Harvest after they have fallen to the ground.

Kale (*Brassica oleracea*)

Nero Di Toscana (Lucinanto type) (OP) – Big leaves and great flavor.

Red Russian (OP) – Very hearty, good flavor, tender leaves, resists bolting.

Leeks (*Allium ampeloprasum*)

American Flag (OP) – Very popular, large thick stocks.

Lancelot (OP) – Heat resistant variety.

Lettuce, head (*Lactuca sativa*)

Batavian Lettuce (OP) - Loose head, thick leaved French lettuce that hold up well in the heat. Also known as summer crisp.

Victoria (OP) - A rich green butterhead type that forms a 10-inch diameter head. Holds up very well in hot weather.

Lettuce, leaf (*Lactuca sativa*)

Black Seeded Simpson (OP) – Very productive trouble-free leaf lettuce.

Melons (*Cucumis melo*)

Ambrosia (OP) - Very sweet, tender melon on six to eight-foot vines.

Ha'Ogen (OP)- Very sweet, aromatic melon with green flesh. Quick growing with 3–5-pound fruit.

Sarah's Choice (H)- Very sweet, oval 3-lb fruit with orange flesh. Resistant to fusarium wilt and powdery mildew.

Onions (*Allium cepa*)

Walla Walla (OP) – Large, sweet, white onion that do well at our medium day length latitude.

Stockton Red (OP) – Medium sized red, sweet onion well suited to our climate and soil.

White Spear (OP)- Bunching onion that does well in the heat.

Stockton Yellow (OP)- Medium-large flattened globes. Thin, light brown-yellow skin with soft white, slightly pungent flesh. Resists bolting but is a short keeper.

Peas (*Lathyrus oleraceus*)

Oregon Sugar Pod II (OP) – Short 30” vines do not need staking. Sweet, flat edible pod pea is disease resistant.

Sugar Ann (sugar snap type) (OP) – Snap pea with round full edible pods on 3-foot vines that do not need at trellis.

Peppers – sweet (*Capsicum annuum*)

Yolo Wonder (OP) – Bell-type pepper that turns from green to red when mature, good leaf cover to limit sunburn.

Purple Beauty (OP) – Medium sized bell-type peppers that start out and stay purple.

Corno di Toro (OP) – (Horn of the Bull) Thin-walled Italian style sweet pepper, 9” long and red when mature.

Gypsy (H) – Very productive disease resistant plant produces a lot of 4-5” thin-walled peppers.

Banana (OP) – Thin-walled pepper, 6-7” long, turns from light yellow to red when mature. Very dependable producer.

Ajvarski (OP)- large, pointed, thick-walled non-bell. Peppers turn from green to deep red when they mature.

Lesya (OP)- Thick walled, heart-shaped, very sweet pepper. Originally from Ukraine.

Ancho Grande (OP) – Mildly hot 4-inch peppers on large plants that need staking. Good for making chili rellenos.

Alliance (H)- Resistant to a variety of virus diseases. Thick walled, green bell type peppers that ripen to deep red. Good leaf canopy for protection from sunscald.

Peppers – hot (*Capsicum annuum*)

Ascent (H) – Productive Thai-style mini peppers that pack a punch.

Poinsettia (OP) – Small pepper cluster at the top of the plant, often grown as an ornamental, edible, and very hot.

Jalapeno (OP) – Classic medium hot pepper, heavy producer.

Hungarian Yellow Wax (OP) – Very hot small yellow pepper.

Poblano (OP) – Heart-shaped 6” fruit with medium heat.

Joe Parker (OP) – Multi-purpose Anaheim type chile pepper, 7” long, dependable producer.

Potatoes (*Solanum tuberosum*)

Yukon Gold (OP) – Medium sized potatoes with sweet yellow flesh.

German Butterball (OP) – Medium sized potatoes with buttery white flesh.

All Blue (OP) – Small to medium sized potatoes that have blue flesh, productive but slow maturing.

Radish (*Raphanus sativus*)

Watermelon (OP) – Large round radish, green on the outside, bright pink on the inside with a surprisingly mild, sweet taste.

Daikon (OP) – Large, long radish with a very mild flavor. The tops can be cooked as greens.

Cherry Belle (OP) – Round radish with white flesh, ready to pick 22 days from planting.

Sweet potato (*Lpomoea batatas*)

Beauregard (OP) – Most popular sweet potato, good disease resistance.

Squash- summer (*Cucurbita pepo*)

Astia zucchini (H) – Very compact 30” diameter plants that produce early and often. Very resistive to powdery mildew.

Fordhook zucchini (OP) – Very productive, classic zucchini.

Black Beauty zucchini (OP) – productive, fast growing, dark green fruit.

Gold Star (H) – Crookneck type squash with good adaptability and disease resistance.

Desert (H) – Very productive dark green zucchini on compact plants. Moderately resistant to common viruses and powdery mildew.

Eight Ball (H)- Round green zucchini that grow on open, bushy plants. Very productive and unique.

Mexicana (H)- Upright plants with an open habit and moderate spines. Strong disease resistance. Produces early, heavy yields of gray-green fruit.

Squash- winter (*Cucurbita spp.*)

Sugar Hubbard (OP) – Large trailing plants produce 4-5 squash each weighing 15 lbs. or more. Very sweet orange flesh.

Table Queen Acorn (OP) – Vines spread 4’, good producer.

Red Kuri (OP) – Japanese variety that produces 4 lb. fruit.

Waltham Butternut (OP) – very popular butternut variety.

Atlas (H) – very vigorous and productive butternut type, good flavor, powdery mildew resistant.

Tomatoes (Solanum lycopersicum)

Principe Borghese (OP) – Compact plants, very productive of 1"x2" fruit. The most popular tomato to dry in Italy.

Ace 55 (OP) – Medium sized red tomato developed at UC Davis in the 40's. One of the few open pollinated varieties that is resistant to fusarium and verticillium.

Early Girl (H) – Medium sized plants produce lots of baseball sized tomatoes with good flavor. Good disease resistance.

Indian Stripe (OP)- Indeterminate vines bear 8 to 10 oz. burgundy-purple tomatoes that are very flavorful.

Mexico (OP) - Very large indeterminate plants produce large (1 lb.), dark pink fruits with very good flavor.

Chocolate Cherry (OP) -Indeterminate vines bear a heavy crop of brown skinned cherry tomatoes.

Sungold (H) – Average sized, sweet yellow cherry tomatoes born on indeterminate vines. Very popular.

Costoluto Genovese (OP) – Large fluted fruit on Indeterminate vines. Heat tolerant.

Lemon boy (H) – Medium sized yellow fruit on Indeterminate vines. Highly resistant to common tomato diseases.

Celebrity (H) – Medium sized red tomato that is very disease resistant. It is sometimes described as semi-determinant because it grows to a set size but will continue to produce throughout the year.

Champion (H) – Good disease resistance, medium sized red fruit. The original version is indeterminate but there are now two separate determinate varieties.

Incas Hybrid (H) A very early ripening pear-shaped tomato with bright red fruits that weigh about 3 oz. and have firm, thick, meaty flesh with excellent keeping quality. Determinate vines with good disease resistance.

Woodle Orange (OP) - Tangerine colored Indeterminate tomato has a very rich & complex flavor. Fruits are round and weigh 10-16 oz.

Cherokee Carbon (H) - A beefsteak type tomato with dusky purple fruit that has a rich, complex flavor. Plants can grow to 7 feet tall.

Benevento (H)- Reliable large raspberry red tomato with striped yellow and red skin

Purple Boy (H)- Very tasty dark salad tomato that produces consistently all summer

Marizol Gold (OP)- Large yellow tomato, originated in Germany. Large plant, production into the fall.

Picus (H)- Disease resistant paste tomato. Also seems not prone to blossom end rot. Long production period for a determinant type.

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