



## Tried and True Vegetable Varieties 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 varieties of vegetables that Yolo County Master Gardeners 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 other varieties that seem interesting and promising.

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

A *variety* on the other hand is one of many expressions of a vegetable species. Brandywine and Roma are different varieties of tomato. Silver Queen and Golden Jubilee are different varieties of corn. Some varieties of a vegetable species will likely do better than others in our climate and soils.

A few other words you will see in the list below. A *hybrid variety* is created when plant breeders intentionally cross-pollinate two different varieties of a plant, attempting to produce an offspring that contains desirable traits of each of the parents. Cross-pollination is a natural process that occurs within members of the same plant species. People have been intentionally creating hybrids at least since the Austrian Monk Gregor Mendel demonstrated the basic rules of plant heredity in the mid-19<sup>th</sup> century. 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.

An *open pollinated variety* has not been hybridized. When a plant is pollinated by another plant of the same variety or self-pollinates, the resulting seeds will produce plants that are the same as the parent plant(s). *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. Still, it is safe to say that true heirloom vegetables have stood the test of time.

The list below will include both hybrid (H) and open pollinated varieties (OP). Both can have a place in a successful vegetable 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 growing 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 sold to gardeners 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 variety recommendations for the full range of vegetables that you can grow in Yolo County. It is limited to varieties that Master Gardeners felt they had enough experience and success with to merit an endorsement. Not all these varieties will be available in local nurseries as starts or even seeds although most will. All are available as seeds through on-line retailers.

### **Recommended Varieties**

#### Asparagus

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

#### Artichoke

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

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

Kentucky Wonder (OP) – Heavy producing all-purpose 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.

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.

### Beans – dry

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

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

### Beets

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.

### Bok choy (Pak choi)

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

### Broccoli

De Cicco (OP) – Medium sized heads but plants put out a lot of side 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

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

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

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

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

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

Armenian (OP) – 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

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.

### Garlic

Italian Late (OP) - A soft neck variety.

Purple Stripe (OP) – A hard neck variety.

Spanish Roja (OP) – a hard neck variety, very spicy with “true” garlic flavor.

### Ground Cherry

Miss Molly (OP) – small tomatillo-like fruit that has a husk, very sweet, tastes like pineapple.

### Kale

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

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

### Leeks

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

Lancelot (OP) – Heat resistant variety.

### Lettuce, head

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

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

### Melons

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

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

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

Sugar Snap (OP) – Snap pea with round full edible pods

### Peppers – sweet

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.

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

### Peppers – hot

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 –

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

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

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

### Squash- summer

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.

### Squash- winter

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 –

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.

UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA DIVISION OF AGRICULTURE AND NATURAL RESOURCES (UC ANR) NONDISCRIMINATION AND AFFIRMATIVE ACTION POLICY STATEMENT FOR UC ANR PUBLICATIONS REGARDING PROGRAM PRACTICES May 2015 The University of California, Division of Agriculture and Natural Resources (UC ANR) prohibits discrimination against or harassment of any person in any of its programs or activities on the basis of race, color, national origin, religion, sex, gender, gender expression, gender identity, pregnancy (which includes pregnancy, childbirth, and medical conditions related to pregnancy or childbirth), physical or mental disability, medical condition (cancer-related or genetic characteristics), genetic information (including family medical history), ancestry, marital status, age, sexual orientation, citizenship, status as a U.S. veteran. UC ANR policy prohibits retaliation against any employee or person in any of its programs or activities for bringing a complaint of discrimination or harassment. UC ANR policy also prohibits retaliation against a person who assists someone with a complaint of discrimination or harassment, or participates in any manner in an investigation or resolution of a complaint of discrimination or harassment. Retaliation includes threats, intimidation, reprisals, and/or adverse actions related to any of its programs or activities. UC ANR is an Equal Opportunity/Affirmative Action Employer. All qualified applicants will receive consideration for employment and/or participation in any of its programs or activities without regard to race, color, religion, sex, national origin, disability, age or protected veteran status. University policy is intended to be consistent with the provisions of applicable State and Federal laws. Inquiries regarding the University's equal employment opportunity policies may be directed to: UCANR, Affirmative Action Compliance and Title IX Officer, University of California, Agriculture and Natural Resources, 2801 Second Street, Davis, CA 95618, (530) 750-1343. Email: [jsafox@ucanr.edu](mailto:jsafox@ucanr.edu). Website: [http://ucanr.edu/sites/anrstaff/Diversity/Affirmative\\_Action/](http://ucanr.edu/sites/anrstaff/Diversity/Affirmative_Action/). This policy statement supersedes the UC ANR Nondiscrimination and Affirmative Action Policy Statement for University of California Publications Regarding Program Practices dated July 2013.