

Varieties That Sell at Harris Seeds

By Bill Russell

Using sales data (dollars) from 2010 and limiting the geographical area to the northeast, the ten best-selling vegetable crops (species) for Harris Seeds were, in decreasing order: sweet corn, pumpkins, squash, peppers, tomatoes, beans, cucumbers, watermelon, cantaloupe, and cabbage. From these ten species 30 of the top-selling varieties were selected.

It is apparent that what sells best for Harris Seeds are the core varieties and not specialty items. This is not to say that specialty crops and new and unique varieties aren't important. They add excitement and interest to our product mix, and each year our catalog is full of new specialty varieties. However, at the end of the day, the items that actually sell best are the core staples.

Another point worth making is that just because a variety sells well for Harris Seeds doesn't mean you should be growing it. It may not be suited to your purposes. We have a wide range of customers with varying needs. Varieties that work well for a shipper/packer, for instance, may not be suited for sale at a roadside market. As I discuss these 30 varieties I'll indicate why each one sells well, who is growing it, and, if applicable, who should not be growing it.

Arranged in alphabetical order by species and then within a species by decreasing sales, 30 of the top sellers were:

Caprice - bush green bean, 4/3 sieve, main season maturity (60 days), machine or hand harvest

- Why it Sells: high yields, medium dark green color, slow seed development, pods held high on plant for clean harvest
- Who Grows it: wholesale shippers for FM and processing, roadside and retail marketers
- Comments: thoroughbred, i.e. performs best under optimal growing conditions and not as well under stress

Lewis - bush green bean, 4/3 sieve

- Why it Sells: early maturity (53 days), high yields, medium dark green color, pods held high on plant, concentrated set for machine or hand harvest, slow seed development
- Who Grows it: wholesale shippers, roadside and retail marketers

Pike - bush green bean, mid-season maturity (55 days), machine or hand harvest

- Why it sells: fresh looking dark green color, 3-sieve, gourmet look, high yields, upright plant with pods held high
- Who Grows it: wholesale shippers, roadside and retail marketers

Bravo – green cabbage, main season maturity (85 days), FM and sauerkraut

- Why it Sells: large, uniform heads, widely adapted, good yields
- Who Grows it: wholesale shippers, roadside and retail marketers, transplant growers

Providence – 82-day, bicolor, synergistic sweet corn

- Why it Sells: unique genetics for superior eating quality, large ears, drought tolerant
- Who Grows it: roadside and retail marketers, wholesale growers selling to local markets
- Comments: medium green husk color and weak flag leaf development

Kristine – 78-day, bicolor, synergistic sweet corn

- Why it Sells: outstanding eating quality, large ear size
- Who Grows it: roadside and retail marketers, wholesale growers selling to local markets

Montauk – 79-day, bicolor, synergistic sweet corn

- Why it Sells: excellent eating quality, very large ears, good yields
- Who Grows it: mostly roadside and retail marketers, wholesale growers selling to local markets
- Comments: ears too big?

XTH2170 – 73-day, bicolor, augmented supersweet

- Why it Sells: early maturing (73 days), large 8” ears, very high eating quality, good husk appeal, good yields
- Who Grows it: roadside and retail marketers, wholesale growers selling to local markets, wholesale shipper/packers
- Comments: lacks rust resistance

277A – 77-day, bicolor, augmented supersweet

- Why it Sells: exceptional eating quality, refined looking ears
- Who Grows it: roadside and retail marketers, wholesale growers selling to local markets
- Comments: loose husk cover, lodge susceptible, lacks rust resistance

XTH 1273 – 73-day, yellow augmented supersweet

- Why it Sells: superb eating quality, large 8” ears, good husk appearance, good yields
- Who Grows it: roadside and retail marketers, wholesale growers selling to local markets, wholesale shipper/packers
- Comments: lacks rust resistance, birds love it

Stonewall - slicing cucumber

- Why it Sells: early (53 days), good fruit length, dark color, high pack out potential, good disease package
- Who Grows it: wholesale shippers, roadside and retail marketers

Regal - pickling cucumber

- Why it Sells: early (52 days), high yielding, slim shape (L/D = 3.3), hand or machine harvest
- Who Grows it: wholesale growers for FM and processing, roadside and retail marketers, transplant growers for sales to home gardeners

Superstar - eastern cantaloupe, main season maturity (86 days)

- Why it Sells: classic big melon of the northeast, round to slightly flattened shape, deeply sutured, coarse netting, large size (6-8 lbs), good sugars
- Who Grows it: everyone (wholesale, retail, and transplant growers)
- Comments: lacks disease resistance (esp. Fusarium race 1 and PM), cracks at stem end

Revolution - sweet bell pepper

- Why it Sells: jumbo size fruit, early maturity (72 days), blocky 4-lobed shape, good disease package, good yields
- Who Grows it: wholesale shippers, roadside and retail marketers

Declaration - sweet bell pepper

- Why it Sells: early maturity (70 days), jumbo fruit size, good disease package including TSWV
- Who Grows it: wholesale shippers, roadside and retail marketers

Lady Bell - sweet bell pepper

- Why it Sells: early (71 days), consistent dependable yields, good fruit size
- Who Grows it: transplant growers for sale to home gardeners
- Comments: lacks disease resistance (esp. BLS), not recommended for field production

Gladiator - pumpkin, 25 lb, 115 days

- Why it Sells: uniform deep orange color, excellent yields, sturdy dark handle, PM resistance, popular 25 lb. size class (40 count in bin)
- Who Grows it: wholesale shippers, roadside and retail marketers
- Comments: #1 selling pumpkin in USA

Magic Wand - pumpkin, 15-25 lb, 115 days

- Why it Sells: dark orange fruit color, sturdy dark handle, good yields, PM resistant
- Who Grows it: wholesale shippers, roadside and retail marketers

Aladdin - pumpkin, 25-35 lb., 115 days

- Why it Sells: dark orange color, excellent yields, PM resistant
- Who Grows it: wholesale shippers, roadside and retail marketers

Mystic Plus - pie pumpkin, 7-8 lbs., 105 days

- Why it Sells: dark, burnt orange color, heavy thick handle, thick, dense flesh, moderate PM resistance
- Who Grows it: wholesale shippers, roadside and retail marketers

Zucchini Elite - zucchini squash

- Why it Sells: superior yields, early (48 days), attractive medium green color, open plant for ease of harvest
- Who Grows it: everyone
- Comments: lacks PM and virus resistance, not recommended for late season plantings

Multipik – yellow, straightneck squash

- Why it Sells: yields, bright yellow fruit color, precocious yellow gene, early maturity (50 days)
- Who Grows it: everyone
- Comments: lacks PM and virus resistance, not recommended for late season plantings

Cougar – yellow, straightneck squash

- Why it Sells: good yellow fruit color, yields, early maturity (50 days), improved virus resistance (IR to ZYMV and PRSV)
- Who Grows it: wholesale shippers, roadside and retail marketers
- Comments: lacks PMT, CMV, and WMV-2 resistance

Waltham Butternut - butternut squash

- Why it Sells: good yields, good fruit size for boxing, excellent interior and exterior fruit color, low seed cost vs. hybrids
- Who grows it: everyone
- Comments: late maturing (97 days), lacks PM resistance

Table Ace - acorn squash, early maturity (78 days)

- Why it Sells: good yields, excellent flesh color, good eating quality
- Who Grows it: everyone
- Comments: lacks PMT

Mountain Fresh Plus – hybrid, round, red tomato, main season maturity (78 days)

- Why it Sells: excellent yields, extra-large fruit size, firm fruits, good disease resistance
- Who Grows it: wholesale shippers (vine ripe and mature green markets), roadside and retail marketers

Primo Red – hybrid, round, red tomato

- Why it Sells: early maturity (68 days), excellent fruit size, high yield potential, good firmness, good eating quality
- Who Grows it: wholesale shippers, roadside and retail marketers
- Comments: pointed blossom end, very compact plant

Jetstar – hybrid, round red tomato

- Why it Sells: vigorous indeterminate plant, second early (72 days), good yields, lower acid flavor
- Who Grows it: greenhouse transplant growers
- Comments: traditional favorite for home garden use

Scarlet Red – hybrid, round red tomato, mid-season maturity (75 days)

- Why it Sells: high yields, extra-large fruit size, eating quality, good firmness
- Who Grows it: wholesale shippers, roadside and retail marketers

Gypsy – seedless watermelon, 13-17 lb, oval-shaped fruits with dark green stripe

- Why it Sells: early maturing (85 days), high yield potential, excellent flesh color, good sugars
- Who Grows it: wholesale shippers, roadside and retail marketers