

EDITORIAL FOR MELON RUNNER 2006

SIDEKICK – THE BEST “OFFSIDER”

After many years of research and testing, Harris Moran, specialist vegetable seed breeders have released their watermelon mini-fruited pollinator. This will be marketed as SIDEKICK in the Australian market by **Lefroy Valley**. This variety has performed outstandingly with the major USA growers over the 2005 season resulting in huge demand for the variety.

Specialist watermelon pollinators have been around for a few years, but only recently have the new generation varieties proved their worth. Growers are finding that there are several advantages offered by these specialist pollinator varieties. Now the entire paddock can be planted to the seedless variety so that yields can be optimised, and management practices can be focussed on the seedless variety. Damage caused to the seedless vine when harvesting seeded fruit in a conventional planting is now avoided.

This does not mean the end of seeded varieties, as they still demand a significant part of the market. It just means that they can be planted separately where cultural practices can be focussed to maximise quality and yield.

SIDEKICK has proved to be an efficient pollinator & impresses with its ability to produce high numbers of pollen & to produce male flowers over an extended period. The small vine, with fine leaves (Fig 1), blends well into the seedless plants and it produces very small fruit which are easily smashed.

After extensive trials and commercial plantings in the USA and here in Australia the most effective ratio of seedless plants to pollinator is 3:1 (3 seedless: 1 pollinator). The pollinator should be planted in the same row as the seedless variety after every third seedless plant, without affecting the standard spacing of the seedless variety (Fig 2).

For further information contact Lefroy Valley – Qld on 07 4635 2099

FIG 1

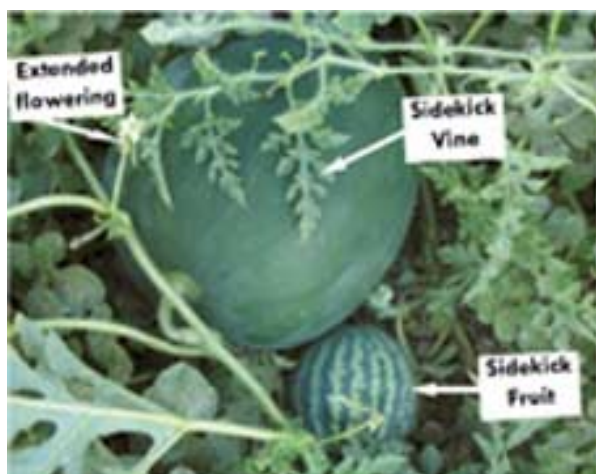


FIG. 2

