Citron, Preserving Melon

_Citrullus lanatus_ (C. vulgaris) var. citroides is a member of the Cucurbitaceae (gourd) family. Don't confuse this with the other, better-known fruit also called citron; that fruit, _Citrus medica_, grows on a small tree and looks like a lemon.

Citron or preserving melon is a close relative of watermelon, but is inedible raw. The flesh and rind are sometimes used for making preserves and pickles. The fruit resembles a watermelon, and is round to oval, 6 to 12 inches long, and light green with darker green stripes and a smooth surface. The flesh is typically white, although some forms have light green or pink flesh. Citron fruit is so tough that you can bounce it on the floor with only a small chance that it will burst. The plant is a low, spreading vine. The plant has both male and female flowers; bees are required for pollination. It is native to Africa.

Citron grows as a weed in California and can infest annual crops, orchards, vineyards, roadsides, ditchbanks, and sandy, dry river or creek beds. It is a troublesome weed in Imperial Valley asparagus fields. Where watermelons are grown, citron becomes particularly undesirable since the two plants readily hybridize.

**Market Information**

**Use.** Citron flesh and rind are sometimes used for sweet preserves and glace fruit. The fruit is occasionally used as hogfeed. Commercial production is rare.

**Sources**

**Seed**

Le Jardin du Gourmet, P.O. Box 75, St. Johnsbury Center, VT 05816

Seeds Blüm, Idaho City Stage, Boise, ID 83706

**More information**


University of California. 1996. WI-131 citron, in _Grower's weed identification handbook_. Publication 4030, UC Division of Agriculture and Natural Resources, Oakland, CA.

Prepared by Claudia Myers (adapted from James Stephens's Minor Vegetables).