

the **vine**line Summer 2023

Official Newsletter of the NATIONAL WATERMELON ASSOCIATION



FRUIT MAKES FRIENDS!



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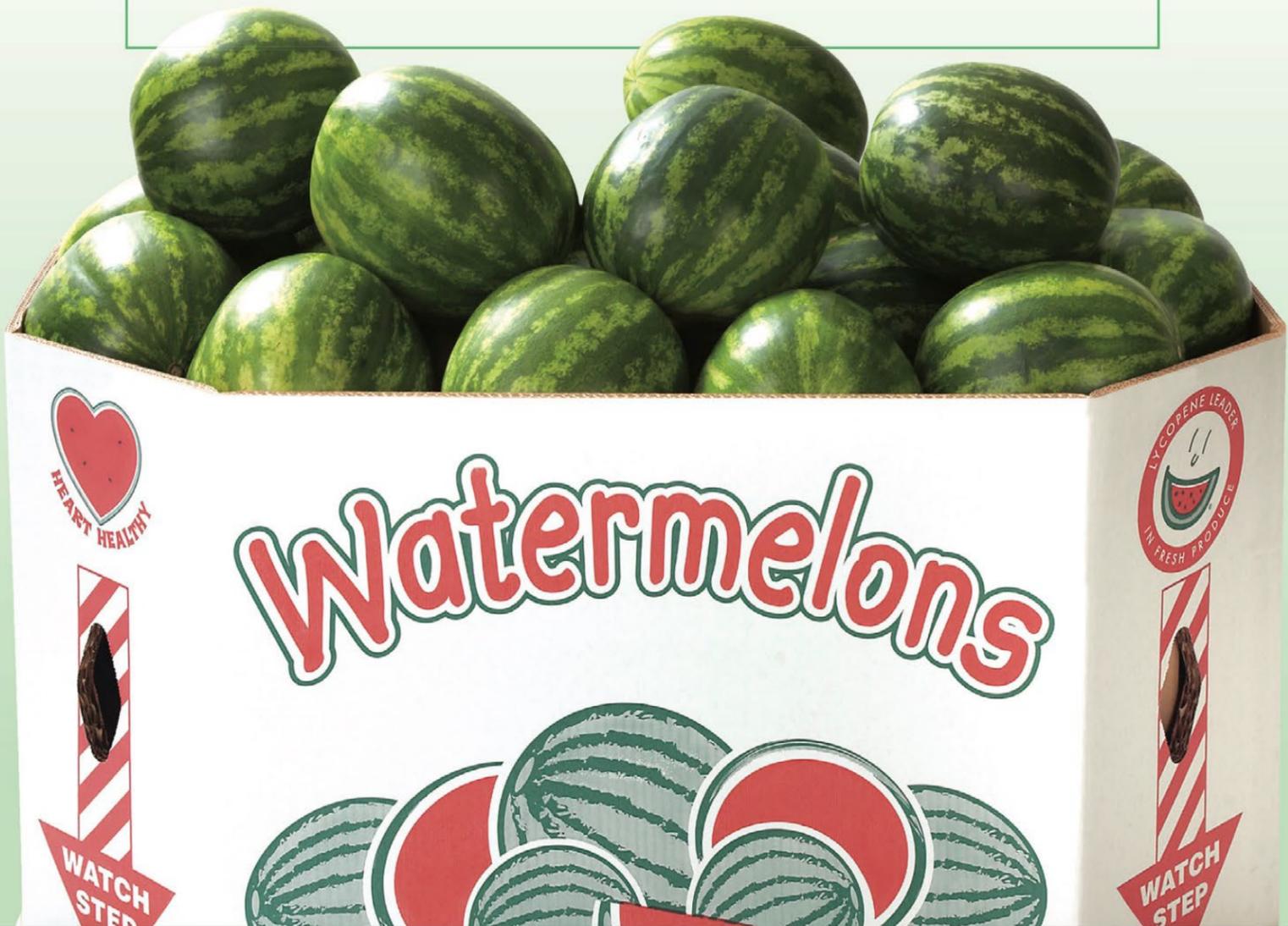
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Welcome to Summer 2023, here on the Vinline, and in your fields!

In this industry, we think about watermelons 365 days a year, but with the arrival of summer, the world is thinking about watermelons. Facebook is filled with watermelon recipes shared far and wide, my kids have been out playing in the yard in a watermelon sprinkler, and our Watermelon Queens have never been busier with promotions, farm tours, and visits to spread the word of our favorite fruit. As the world outside our industry turns their attention to watermelon, the cover of this magazine reflects a message I learned from a friend at one of my first jobs in produce: "Fruit Makes Friends". When we share the bounty of our harvest, we can make allies that we carry along with us on our journey.

In that spirit, we've invited some friends to this edition of the Vinline. This association was born 109 years ago out of the idea that we can do more if we are united, and today that idea stands- not just inside the membership and staff, but alongside the partners, allies, and coalitions that can drive this industry forward, through the next generation, and the next one hundred years. This issue of the Vinline features an update from the leadership of the National Coalition of Agricultural Employers (NCAE), a coalition that NWA is a member of, who are pushing back on lawmakers and federal authorities who are enforcing a broken Ag Labor system. We'll also feature reports from the National Watermelon Promotion Board (NWPB) on the work they're doing to promote watermelons. We'll also hear about this issue from Dr. Anthony Keinath of Clemson University, part of our network of research scientists, on the work he's doing on Fusarium Wilt. All of this is done alongside the updates from our National and State Watermelon Queens that you expect when you arrive for this publication.

We're proud to bring you this next edition of the Vinline (myself, and the NWA Staff team, Monica, Tami, Kerri, and Queen Olivia). The content here reflects the Association in general- continuing to deliver what you expect, while also striving to get you new information and value with the help of our friends.

We'll keep working hard for you through this watermelon season... And the next and the next! Thank you for your dedication and example, for pushing through from season to season, and for lifting up yourself and those around you this season.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "GFS", is written over a decorative background of watermelon slices and whole watermelons.

George F. Szczepanski
Executive Director
National Watermelon Association

Clifton Seed Company

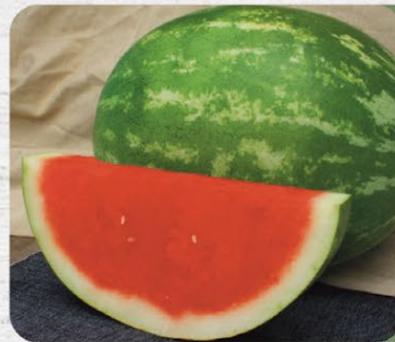
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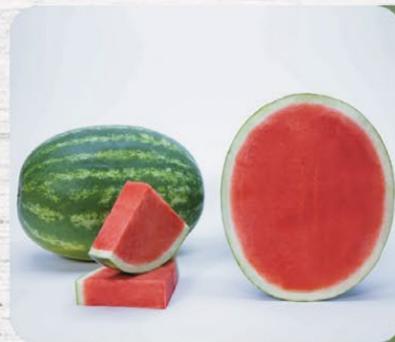
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Nice Round-Oval Shape
Crisp Flesh and Tiny Pips
Excellent Main Season Variety



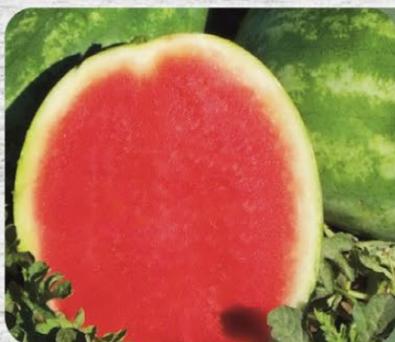
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National Report

Hello Summer!

• In March, Queen Olivia and I attended the 40th Annual North Carolina Watermelon Association Convention in Wrightsville Beach. We heard Jim Quick and The Coastline Band, listened to great presentations from Senator Brent Jackson, Representative John Bell, NWPB Executive Director Mark Arney, and Mr. Jason Hanselman with the NWPB. All the festivities were so fun and at the end of the convention we celebrated Mrs. Sharon Rogers on her 10 year anniversary as promotions coordinator and crowned the new 2023 North Carolina Watermelon Queen, Miss Gracy Peterson! We want to wish former Queen Emory a successful future in whatever direction she chooses in life! [Pics #1,2,3](#)

o We want to thank our generous sponsors for providing a way for Queen Olivia to have the privilege of attending this convention:

- North Carolina Watermelon Association
- James and Courtney Sharp of Fresh Pik
- Frank and Lynette Howell of Howell Farming Company
- Sue Colucci with Clifton Seed
- Mitch Mitchell with International Paper
- Joe Jones with Seedway

• NWA Queen Olivia and Texas Watermelon Queen, Savannah Carr, joined the Melon Man, Mr. Ross Chastain, as he competed in the Pit Boss at the Circuits of the Americas in Austin, Texas. The day started by Mr. Chad Chastain providing us with a well-rounded knowledge of all things NASCAR and him acting as our host! As three native Texas girls, we then headed to the capitol to explore the big city of Austin. On Day 2, we were joined by Mrs. Susan Chastain in Pit Road where we had the experience of the lifetime. [Pics #4,5,6](#)

o Thanks to our sponsors for allowing us to make this promotion possible:

- The Chastain Family
- Borders Melons
- Wiggins Wholesale
- Prukop Farms
- JDI Farms
- Warren Produce
- Cameron Cruz and Miles Michel of Gowan Texas
- Wiggins Farms

• A peak into Fresh From Florida before Queen Training, Mrs. Heather Raulerson of International Paper, was a phenomenal tour guide for Queen Olivia and I. She picked us up from the airport with lunch in hand. We traveled to Mack Farms, Inc where Mr. Mack showed us around his diverse packing shed. We then headed to the field and had a sample of a wonderful watermelon. We were then joined by Mr. Bob Gibson and his daughter, Mrs. Samantha of Gibson Produce at Vero Prime. [Pics #7,8,9](#)

o Thank you so much to Mrs. Heather Raulerson of International Paper for this opportunity.

• Watermelon Queens took over the home of Disney Princesses on the day before Queen Training 2023. [Pics #10, 11, 12, 13](#)

o Thank you so much to Mr. Colton Gammill of Nutrien Ag Solutions and Mr. Jamey Adams of High Mark Seed Company for making this magical day possible!

• Thank you to NWPB for equipping the newest ambassadors of our industry with education and information of all things watermelon to promote and educate consumers and educators in all our upcoming promotions in 2023. Mr. Carmine and Mrs. Vanessa Gallo taught the queens the best way to communicate their watermelon stories. Stephanie Barlow, Senior Director of Communications, and Juliemar Rosado, Director of Retail and International Marketing, led Watermelon 101. We were taught watermelon facts, how to be a queen and the best advocate for the industry and so much more! Mrs. Katelyn Miller and Mrs. Kel Gibson took time out of their busy schedules to give us an inside look into promotions, the correct outfits, and social media. Mrs. Kerri Wiggins, promotions coordinator for the NWA, gave a final presentation for the day that involved etiquette and a segment of styling tips for the queens. On day two, Mrs. Gibson, Ms. Caroline Buchanan and Mrs. Christina Malinowski followed up concerning the topic of social media with tips on content creation, social media posting, and insightful tips on how to have the best social media presentation and TikTok training. Social media is a great asset that will ultimately help us share our favorite fruit to people around the world. [Pics #14, 15, 16](#)

o Thank you to the NWPB for providing this weekend to help equip all the queens to be the best representatives possible for this industry! The NWPB does an incredible job at providing the entire industry with immediate access to all things watermelon. The entire industry is grateful for everything the NWPB does.



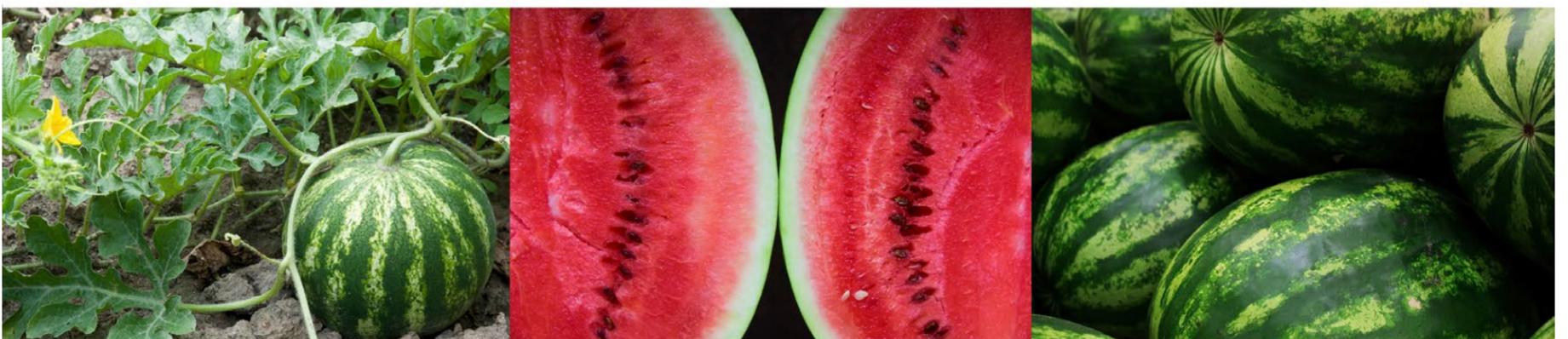
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National Report

□ In May Queen Olivia visited the Snook Independent School District and visited many students providing them with watermelon stickers, watermelon coloring pages and a fun time of watermelon book readings. She answered many watermelon and queen questions, and the final treat was the kids ate watermelon-colored popsicles. **Pics #17, 18, 19**

o Thank you to Mrs. Kerri Snow Wiggins, and Miss Brookleigh of Wiggins Wholesale for attending, arranging and sponsoring this event. It is always a privilege to be able to educate young children on the importance of our industry.

□ Our Future, Our Texas

o With the help of TWA Vice President, Mrs. Kristin Warner of Syngenta, watermelon samples along with watermelon merchandise were handed out to visitors of the Austin Community Market located outside the HEB on South Congress showcased the importance of Texas Agriculture and Texas Watermelon. **Pics #20, 21, 22**

□ Thank you to the NWPB for making these kinds of promotions possible! It is always an honor to connect to the consumer to the grower.

□ Enza Zaden Field Day & South-Central Florida Farm Tours were so fun and educational! Queen Olivia was hosted by Mr. Rod Jorgenson of Enza Zaden and educated both Queen Olivia and Queen Alyssa, as well as many others. They both appreciate him sharing in depth the knowledge that will better equip them to educate consumers. **Pics #23, 24, 25**

□ Their farm tours consisted of visits to Trey Barnwell Farms, Veg- King and Sun Fresh Farms, Turner Farms, Kids Choice, and Houston Jones Farms. They discussed challenges faced this season and what farming practices worked best for each of them. **Pics #26, 27, 28**

□ Queen Olivia had a radio interview at 104.5 Classic Country where she and Queen Alyssa discussed their role as promotional ambassadors and the importance of buying locally grown watermelon. Next, they dove into a Sprouts retail promotion to educate and spread knowledge to the many consumers that visited the store that day! **Pics #29**

o Thank you to their sponsors, Enza Zaden, Sun Fresh Produce, Turner Farms, Sunstate Produce, Barnwell Farms, Veg-King, Melon 1, Kids Choice and NWPB

□ The next retail promotion was on Potranco in San Antonio at the HEB Plus. Queen Olivia bridged the gap between consumers and growers to help them select the best watermelon. She also enjoyed passing out watermelon stickers and telling the watermelon story. This is by far one of her favorite duties as a National Watermelon Queen! **Pics #30, 31, 32**

o Thank you to the NWPB for making this promotion possible.





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National Pictures

• HEB Field Days Produce Expose was attended by NWA Queen Olivia and TWA Queen Savannah Carr. They visited with HEB store managers to teach the best practices to get watermelon in consumers cart and share all things watermelon! This was also an incredible way for managers to invite the queens to various stores for promotions all season long. **Pics #33, 34, 35**

o Thank you to M & P Produce Co. and Bordres Melons for their sponsorship to this fabulous expo! Every meal was delicious, and it was truly an honor to represent such welcoming farming families.

• Our next stop was to join FWA Queen Alyssa in a series of Fresh From Florida recipe videos and promos with Chef Justin. **Pics #36, 37, 38**

• Next Queen Olivia did multiple farm tours with various growers and was joined by her sister queens, FWA Queen Alyssa and GCWA Queen Juliana. The tours consisted of visiting Mr. Bob Gibson of Gibson Produce, Mr. Murray Tillis of Tillis Farms, Mr. and Mrs. Rantz Smith of Smith Farms, Mr. and Mrs. Trey Smith of T. Smith Farms, Mr and Mrs. Dan Thomas of Diamond 99, Mr. Trevor Bass of Bass Farms, Mr. Adam Whitehurst of Whitehurst Cattle Co. and Mr. Jerry Mills of Jerry Mills Watermelons, and Mr. and Mrs. Terry Parrish. **Pics #39, 40, 41, 42, 43, 44, 45, 46**

• The next stop for the Queens were to Bell Elementary School where they were able to educate 96 3rd graders on all thing's watermelon, read books, pass out stickers and even share some "slices of happiness!" A special thank you goes to Mr. Dan and Mrs. Carrie Thomas of Diamond 99 for inviting us to promote our favorite fruit and educating tomorrow's future on the importance of watermelon. **Pics #47, 48, 49**



SAVE THE DATE!

J
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FEBRUARY 21ST-25TH 2024



SCOTTSDALE



Arizona



National Pictures

• We visited the 78th Annual Newberry Parade, Watermelon Festival and Pageant. Congratulations to Miss Tori Mills for being crowned as the 78th Newberry Watermelon Queen. **Pics #50, 51, 52**

o Thank you so much to Smith Farms, Seedway, Diamond 99, T. Smith Farms, Clifton Seed Company. The kindness and generosity of all of you were above anything we ever expected.

• Queen Olivia's next tour was the 2023 RGV grower's tour. She was joined by TWA Queen Savannah. Together they toured all over the RGV and visited growers, shippers, packers and harvesters. They had the best time and learned an incredible amount of insight from that area. We want to thank all of the folks that took time out of their busy schedule to visit with us. We also want to thank our sponsors that made this tour possible! **Pics #53, 54, 55, 56, 57, 58, 59, 60**

o Thank you so much to Seedway, Gowan, Simplot, Nutrien, BASF, Prukop Farms and Chip Berry Produce. The industry as well as the queens appreciates your continued support to help promote watermelons.

• Our last stop on our way home from the RGV Tour 2023, was to stop by H-E-B retail store to do a promotion to educate consumers on how we think is the best way to choose a ripe watermelon. **Pics #61, 62, 63, 64**

o We want to thank the NWPB for making promotions like this possible!



Vinline Research News

How Seedless Watermelon Cultivars React to Fusarium Wilt: Average Results of 2021 and 2022 Trials

Anthony P. Keinath, Clemson University, Coastal REC, Charleston, SC

As part of a large USDA Specialty Crop Research Initiative grant, I have been working with Dr. Jonathan Schultheis, Horticulturist at NCSU, to evaluate seedless watermelon cultivars grown in plots naturally infested with the Fusarium wilt fungus. The South Carolina trials were done in a Fusarium-infested field at the Coastal Research and Education Center that has had *Fusarium oxysporum* f. sp. *niveum* races 1 and 2 in it since 2005. Eight cultivars were tested both years.



Figure 1 shows the relationship between marketable weight (pounds per acre) and the percentage wilted plants near the end of the season (10 weeks after transplanting in 2021 and 11 weeks in 2022). It's clear that the more diseased plants in a field, the lower the marketable yield. Based on this graph, Fusarium wilt was the main reason yields differed among cultivars in this study. Fascination grafted onto Carolina Strongback citron rootstock (Fascination Grafted) reached the expected yield of 40,000 pounds per acre and had no wilted plants (0 of 96 plants examined in the 2 years). On the other end, Shoreline had the lowest yields in both years and the highest percentage of wilted plants.

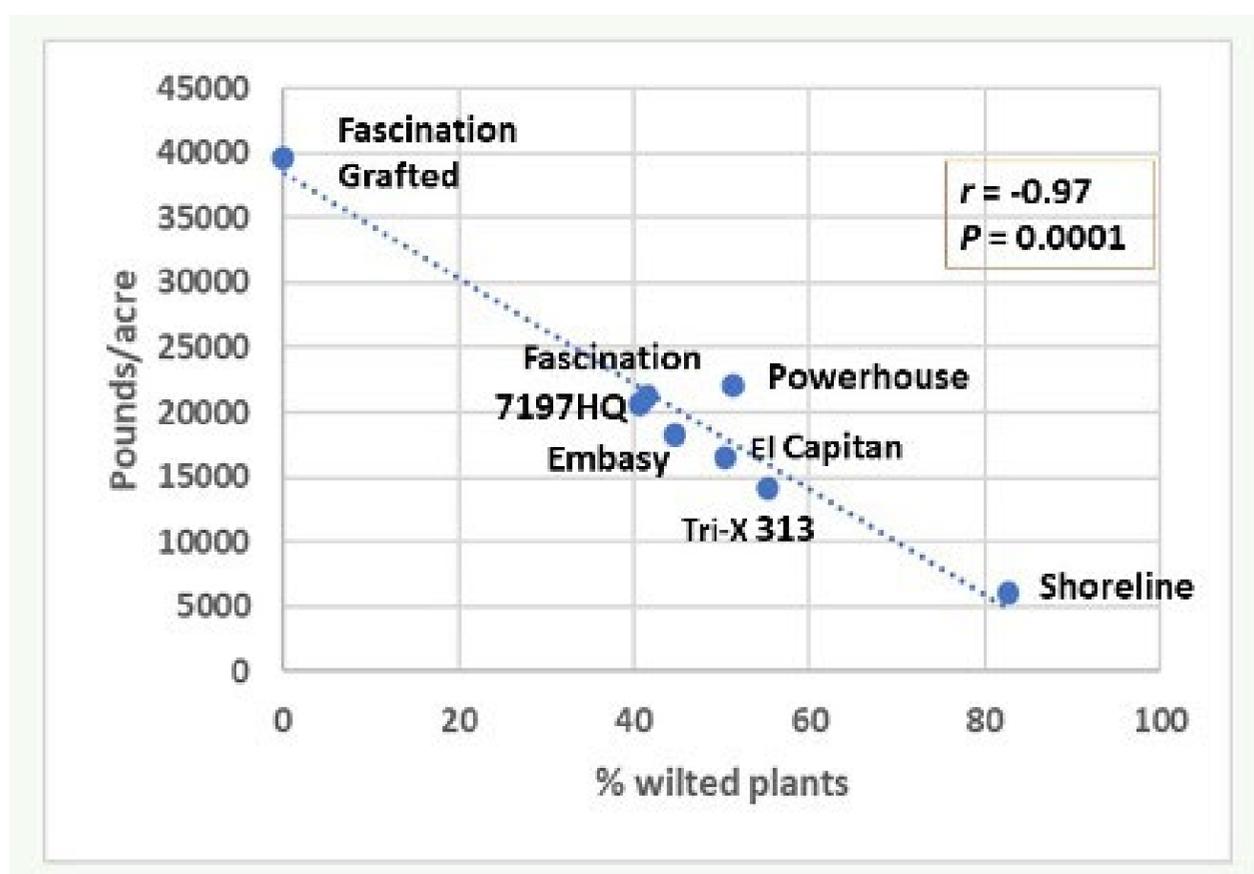


Fig. 1. A greater percentage of wilted plants led to lower marketable fruit weight.

Disease ratings were similar for each cultivar in the two years, although disease was more severe in 2022 than in 2021. For example, the final wilt percentage on Shoreline was 68% in 2021 and 94% in 2022. In 2022 Fusarium wilt symptoms continued to appear after harvest started, likely due to the extremely hot, dry conditions in June. Yields did not differ significantly between years.

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Four measurements of postharvest quality were done: severity of hollow heart, number of hard seeds, Brix, and flesh firmness (measured with a handheld penetrometer). In general, there were few consistent differences among the cultivars.

- Hollow heart was relatively low, and most fruit with hollow heart had small cracks in the flesh.
- There were more seeds per fruit in 2021 than in 2022; in 2022, grafted Fascination had more seeds per fruit, an average of 0.9 seed, than all other cultivars.
- In 2021, cultivars with more diseased plants had lower Brix, while Brix was relatively high for all cultivars in 2022, likely due to the dry weather.
- Flesh firmness differed among cultivars in both years; however, firmness varied each year. In general, Shoreline had the firmest fruit both years, while Tri-X 313 was among the cultivars with less firm fruit.

	2021	2022
Avg. fruit weight (lb)	12.4 to 17.0	13.0 to 18.9
Hollow heart (% of fruit)	11%	13%
Hollow heart rated 3-4 of 5	2%	4%
Seeds per fruit	0.5 to 1.2	0 to 0.9*
Brix	9.2-11.5*	10.6 to 12.1
Flesh firmness	3.2 to 4.6*	2.6 to 3.9*
*Cultivars differed.		

Conclusions

- Growers can expect similar yields from these cultivars planted into their fields infested with Fusarium wilt, because the results were similar between the two years in this study. The test field is heavily infested with Fusarium, so yields may be better in growers’ fields that are not as heavily or uniformly infested.
- Six of the eight cultivars performed similarly, including El Capitan, Tri-X-313, Fascination, Powerhouse, Embassy, and 7197HQ, because they have resistance to race 1 but no resistance to race 2.
- The Carolina Strongback rootstock used to graft Fascination is resistant to races 1 and 2, which explains why grafted Fascination did so well in this study.
- Shoreline is not recommended in any field with Fusarium wilt. If growers must grow this cultivar to satisfy buyers’ requests, they need to use integrated management practices to reduce the percentage of infected plants. See Land-Grant Press 1022: Integrated Management for Fusarium Wilt of Watermelon.



Watermelon Board Announces Significant Positive Impact for Watermelon Industry with 19:1 ROI

Findings from Study in Partnership with Armada Corporate Intelligence, Inc. Conclude Strong Relationship Between Promotional Activities and Grower Revenues



National Watermelon Promotion Board (NWPB) econometric research findings from Armada Corporate Intelligence, Inc. demonstrate the significant positive impact of the NWPB’s activities on the demand for watermelon. The study also shows that investment in the NWPB’s promotional activities results in a strong return on investment (ROI) of 19:1. Additional findings of the study included the NWPB’s significant impact on the retail and FOB price of watermelon from 2017 – 2021 and its impact on the general economy.

“The NWPB is proud to continue our work in promoting watermelon and supporting the watermelon industry,” said Mark Arney, Executive Director at the NWPB.

The full report An Economic Analysis of Market Impacts of the National Watermelon Promotion Board: 2017-2021 is available at the Industry section of NWPB’s website.

Watermelon Day DIY Activity Guide

Newly launched and in time for end-of-school year parties is an educator and parent Pinterest-inspired Watermelon Day activity guide! Designed to inspire creativity while encouraging healthy eating habits among children, the guide provides a wide range of hands-on educational crafts, décor ideas, coloring pages and activities that feature our favorite fruit – watermelon!

The new guide is part of the NWPB's ongoing efforts to promote healthy nutrition and highlight the important role that watermelon can play in a healthy diet. Watermelon is a sweet, delicious and nutritious fruit, making it an excellent choice for people of all ages.

The activity guide includes a variety of fun and educational activities, some of which include creating watermelon-inspired decorations, coloring pages featuring watermelon characters, and making healthy snacks using watermelon as the main ingredient. The crafts and activities offered will serve as an excellent resource for individuals looking to host a watermelon-themed party this summer. Whether it's creating suncatchers or engaging in an outdoor watermelon bowling game, the vibrant and refreshing ambiance that watermelon brings will undoubtedly generate delightful summer memories. Check out the guide at watermelon.org/watermelonday.



NWPB Launches Online Watermelon Education Course for Retail Employees

The National Watermelon Promotion Board (NWPB) has launched an online watermelon education course for retail employees on watermelon.org. The Watermelon Learning Lab is designed to help retail employees enhance their knowledge of watermelon and educate them about cultivation, consumer insights, nutritional benefits, merchandising tips and more. The lessons are available to all retail employees seeking to educate employees that work with watermelon, free of charge, and can be accessed on the Retailers' section watermelon.org.

"Providing accurate and knowledgeable product information is a path to purchase opportunity," said Juliemar Rosado, director of retail and international marketing. "We wanted to create a resource that would help retail employees better understand the watermelon category and how to promote it best to their customers." The Watermelon Learning Lab is an online tool complete with five lesson plans, mini quizzes and videos, making it easy for retail employees to learn about watermelons. Upon completion of the quiz, a certificate of completion will be sent to you via email. While this is designed to learn at your own pace, the whole learning lab completion to certificate can be done in less than 30 minutes. "We are thrilled to launch this online education tool and look forward to seeing the positive impact it will have on retail employees across the country," added Juliemar. "We hope this resource will inspire retail employees to share their knowledge with customers and help promote the many benefits of watermelons."

For more information about the online watermelon education course, please visit <https://www.watermelon.org/audiences/retailers/retail-education/>.



NCAE Fights Harmful AEWL Regulation

The National Council of Agricultural Employers (NCAE) is the national association focusing on agricultural labor issues from the employer's viewpoint. Our members are farmers, ranchers, associations including NWA, agents, farm labor contractors and others whose business interests revolve around agricultural employer issues. NCAE advocates for legislation, regulation, and federal policies to keep agricultural employers ethically and economically sustainable in the global marketplace. Put another way, we sound the alarm about upcoming battles and plan the strategies to make sure that American farmers and ranchers can continue to feed our nation and the world.

One of the biggest battles farmers and ranchers are facing is the Department of Labor's (DOL) new Adverse Effect Wage Rate (AEWR) Final Rule. The AEWR is intended to protect domestic workers from being negatively impacted by H-2A workers in similarly employed. This Rule accomplishes that by throwing U.S. farm and ranch families under the bus at every turn.



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NCAE's efforts to battle the AEWR started long before the most recent regulation. In January 2022, following DOL's proposal of this rule, the DOL received comments from NCAE, and hundreds of family farms and ranches located across the country raising concerns regarding the madness this approach. Commenters pointed out that the DOL's regulations and its continued misuse of survey instruments not designed to capture actual agricultural wage rates were forcing America's food production to flee to overseas competitors.

NCAE has repeatedly petitioned the Secretaries of Labor to make a determination of an adverse effect to the domestic workforce due to the employment of H-2A workers prior to mandating an Adverse Effect Wage Rate. NCAE also called upon U.S. Department of Agriculture's (USDA) Secretary Tom Vilsack to request that the National Agricultural Statistics Service address questions about the Farm Labor Survey (FLS) related to DOL's misuse of that survey to determine farm labor wages.

In February 2023, the DOL published the new AEWR Final Rule. Rather than acknowledge and address the alarm sounded by the agricultural community and the Small Business Administration (SBA), the DOL moved forward with rulemaking that turns its back on commonsense and the American people yet again. In the Final Rule, DOL states that 98% of job opportunities will not change from the FLS-based AEWR and the wage impacts are not significant for 98% of small employers.



This is a vast underestimation of the impact this Rule will have on farmers and ranchers nationwide and ignores the alarm sounded by the SBA.

The new Rule indicates that DOL will continue to use the FLS without establishing whether an adverse effect exists. Manufacturing wages disconnected from the marketplace puts American farmers at a competitive disadvantage—the numbers don't lie. Agricultural wages in Mexico average \$1.50 per hour. Canadian agricultural workers similarly employed may receive between \$9.62 and \$11.58 per hour. Comparatively, U.S. employers must pay an AEWR between \$13.67 and \$18.65 to H-2A workers and domestic workers in corresponding employment.

There is no doubt—this disparity is slamming doors closed on American farms and ranches permanently. DOL further complicated the AEWR by injecting additional wage rates into the program to compensate some workers for routine on-farm chores. In direct conflict with its prior stance, the DOL now proposes to use the Occupational Employment and Wages Survey (OEWS) to set the wage for thousands of H-2A farmworkers for some of these routine on-farm chores. OEWS data captures wages for urban, year-round work in tangentially related non-farm occupations. It is not a surprise that the OEWS wages are thus much higher.

The application of OEWS wages is equally confounding. Say a farm in Florida has 50 workers. Half of the workers are domestic, and the other half are H-2As. After picking fruit in the morning, one H-2A worker may drive a truck full of fruit a mile or less to a cooling facility, drive back, and resume picking with their fellow workers.

Under the new AEWR, not only does the worker who drove receive wages for heavy-duty trucking, an increase from \$14.33 to \$21.62 per hour, but all the domestic workers will have to be paid \$21.62 for the entirety of the contract! Under this illogic, DOL expects us to believe that paying that temporary seasonal foreign agricultural worker agricultural wages will adversely affect long-haul year-round drivers for Amazon or FedEx.

Like you, we know that these are very different jobs. We cannot sit idly by and let the DOL arbitrarily destroy American agriculture. And we aren't.

In April 2023, NCAE, Florida Growers Association, Florida Citrus Mutual, Florida Fruit and Vegetable Association, G&F Farms, and Franberry Farms, filed suit against the DOL in the Middle District of Florida to push back against this harmful rule. Our first step was seek a hearing on a Motion for Preliminary Injunction—a way to stop the Rule before employers are forced to pay the higher wages. A hearing was held on our Motion on May 23, 2023.

While we await the outcome of this litigation, we are not just waiting around. Our H-2A Committee meets each week fielding questions and finding answers for members trying to figure out how to get the labor they desperately need under these new nebulous regulations. We recently held a webinar with labor experts who discussed various aspects of the Rule and how farmers, ranchers, and agricultural employers can prepare their operation for the impending change. We are preparing our members for best case, worst case, and just-in-case scenarios.

One thing is for certain—we must fight harmful regulations like the new AEWR. If we want to continue to find American grown food on grocery shelves, it is a battle we cannot afford to lose.

Florida Report

Greeting from the Sunshine State of Florida

As you can see our Florida Watermelon Season is here!

These past few months, our 2023 Florida Watermelon Queen Alyssa Armentrout and I have been very busy on the road from visiting watermelon farmers, packing sheds, Greenhouses, fields days with Enza Zaden, talking and educating elementary kids, the National Watermelon Promotion Board Queen Training, radio promotion, in-store grocery store promotions, local festivals, Andrew 5K Run, Watermelon Day at the Florida Children's Museum, Cares Dinner, pageants, many parades, Taste of Florida Ag Reception at the state Capitol, video and taping recipe with Chef Justin with the Dept. of Agriculture "Fresh from Florida" to NASCAR Xfinity Race in Darlington and NASCAR Craftsman Truck Race in Martinsville with NASCAR Driver Ross Chastain and his brother Chad Chastain driving in the Atlanta Xfinity Race. Also, our first runner up Reagan Hudson helped out this past month with the USA Beach Running Championship 5K Run in Cocoa Beach with Alyssa McKnight with Fresh from Florida.

A HUGE thank you to all of our sponsors! Queen Alyssa's mission this season has been talking to our watermelon farmers on the importance of our watermelon industry to share to our consumers of the hard work it takes to bring the "Food to the Table". She has been sharing these stories these past few months all over the state to our local grocery stores to educating our kids in the schools. In the past few months, we have done 20 local grocery store promotions including Publix, Detwiler's Farm Market and Sprouts Farmers Market. We have also worked on educating over 1000 kids throughout the state of Florida on the many benefits of watermelon. In the next month she will continue to educate our kids and be at your local Winn Dixie stores and Longs in Canada.

My thoughts and prayers are with the family of Debbie Johnson, and the co-workers of ASG on the sudden loss of Debbie Johnson. Debbie was a such hard worker, caring and dedicated to her job and loved every one of her clients that she had with ASG. She will be truly missed by everyone that she worked with her along with her family.

If you would like Queen Alyssa for any appearance, please reach out to me. As I close out this summer edition of the Vinline, please remember to follow us on Facebook and Instagram under the Florida Watermelon Association.

Wishing everyone a successful Watermelon season this year!

Debra Harrison – Florida Watermelon Promotions Coordinator
 Email: debra@flfwa.com
 Cellular: (863) 633-8306



From the Seed production at the Mobley Plant World



Queen Alyssa visiting with our Florida Watermelon President Trey Miller.



to visiting Watermelon Fields



"Congratulations" to all the winners at the Desoto County Watermelon Pageant.



to different varieties of Florida Watermelons



Thank you Stephanie and Juliemar with NWPB for everything you do for our Queens.



to promoting Florida Watermelons at your local grocery stores



at the Atlanta Motor Speedway with Georgia Queen Charlee and Xfinity Driver #91 Chad Chastain.



and then educating our kids about our watermelon industry, this is what Queen Alyssa's mission is this year.



Videotaping in the kitchen with "Chef Justin" from Fresh from Florida making delicious watermelon dishes.



Thank you Bob Hochmuth with University of Florida IFAS Center for all of your support in our industry.



"Watermelon Day" at the Florida Children's Museum in Lakeland with Steve Nichols with Global Produce.



at the "Cares Dinner" in Live Oak with Laura Land and Chancy Deadwyler. Thank you, ladies, for all of your help in preparing these wonderful dishes.



– Spending the day at Darlington Speedway with NASCAR Driver Ross Chastain promoting Florida Watermelons.



NASCAR Driver Ross Chastain and Queen Alyssa handed out Florida Watermelon slices in Martinsville.



Queen Alyssa enjoys riding in local parades and handed out candy to all the spectators.

Georgia Report

Hello everyone!

It's summertime in Georgia, y'all! Watermelon has hit our retailers across the state and beyond, and we are over the top about eating local and shopping locally! These times are sweeter than ever!

GWA Queen promotions are in full swing, and our 2023 Queen Charley has been hard at work! March was a busy month for Queen Charley as she visited schools across the state and shared in their farm day experiences. At the Georgia Food and Wine Festival, GWA was a vendor handing out over 1,000 fresh cut containers of watermelon to the festival attendees. The month of March also included a tour and visit with state representatives at the Georgia State Capital, as well as a NASCAR race with Ross Chastain at the Atlanta Motor Speedway.

Queen Charley joined the Moody AFB Commissary team in Valdosta, GA, as they celebrated April-Month of the Military Child. The National Watermelon Promotion Board hosted Queen Media Training in Orlando, Florida, where all the state Queens and the National Queen participated in the communications skills workshop, social media posting tips and Tik-Tok demonstration practices. Each Queen competed in an Instagram content creation contest. Queen Charley's graphic was voted 1st place. Way to go Queen Charley!

Sprouts Farmers Market in Atlanta invited our Queen to visit and hand out fresh sliced watermelon to the consumers. While at the store location, the Georgia Farm Monitor visited and interviewed Queen Charley. The segment aired in early May. Visit Queen Charley's Instagram page to view.

Thank you to Ross Chastain for inviting Queen Charley to join his team at N. Wilkesboro Speedway for the Tyson 250 Truck Challenge on May 20th, 2023. Georgia watermelons, Queen Charley, and Ross gained a lot of media coverage and made it to Fox Sports 1 national news! Also, in May and June, Queen Charley joined Kroger, Food Depot, and Food Lion to share the happy fruit with their consumers.

The GWA would like to thank Melon 1, Leger and Son, and Jim Rash Inc. for their support of the 2023 Queen Promotional program!

Be sure to follow Queen Charley on Instagram @gawatermelonqueen! She's doing some good stuff! Check it out!

Would you like to schedule a date for our Georgia Watermelon Queen to visit your location? Please call Dawn Cheplick at 706-845-8575 or dcheplick@asginfo.net to book the queen.

Sincerely,
Dawn Cheplick, Promotions Coordinator
706-845-8575
dcheplick@asginfo.net



Commerce Middle School Ag Day.



Consumers love sampling watermelon at the store!



Educating festival goers about Georgia watermelon!



Queen Charley picks out the perfect watermelon for this gentleman at Sprouts.



State Capital visit with Governor Brian Kemp and First Lady, Ag Commissioner Tyler Harper, and State Representative Robert Dickey.



Media opps are the BEST!



Queen Charley spends a day at the Georgia Department of Agriculture.



Media crews love watermelon too!



Contest time! Queen Charley creates this graphic Queen Training in less than 7 minutes and takes home the prize for best in show!



This is why we call it the HAPPY FRUIT!



Queen Charley servin' up some fresh cut watermelon to the pit crews at N. Wilkesboro Speedway.



Queen Charley interviewed by the Georgia Farm Monitor.

Gulf Coast Report

Happy Summer!

Queen Julianna has hit the ground running this spring. She is continually learning more about our industry so she can promote watermelons to the best of her ability in the Gulf Coast region and across the United States.

She traveled to Orlando, Florida with our 1st runner-up Sierra McLean and 2nd runner-up Ruby Garcia to take part in Queen Training hosted by the National Watermelon Promotion Board (NWPB). A very special thank you to Stephanie Barlow and Juliemar Rosado for hosting such a knowledge filled weekend for our queens.

A few of Queen Julianna's promotions she has already completed this season are listed below:

- WDHN-TV interviewed Queen Julianna about the Gulf Coast Watermelon Association, her role as queen, and all things watermelon to over 1,000 viewers.
- Queen Julianna was able to read and do a watermelon craft with kindergartens at Houston Academy School.
- The Dothan Piggly Wiggly had Queen Julianna pass out watermelon samples to their customers.
- She has had farm tours with Seedway, T. Smith Farms, and Clifton Seed Company.
- Served watermelon to all grades at Cross City Elementary during lunchtime.
- Attended the Newberry Watermelon Festival, Pageant, and Parade.

We have the next 3 months filled with farm tours, farmer's markets, grocery stores, festivals, plant visits, cooking demonstrations, and lots more! If you would like to book the 2023 Gulf Coast Watermelon Queen please email Sarah Jane at gulfcoastwatermelonqueen@gmail.com to schedule a promotion.

Queen Julianna and I wish you the most successful watermelon season!

Many Blessings,
Sarah Jane Levine
Gulf Coast Watermelon Association Promotion Coordinator
(337) 348-4465
gulfcoastwatermelonqueen@gmail.com



On set for Wake Up Wiregrass interview at WDHN-TV



Queen Julianna checking out a watermelon bus!



Students at Houston Academy enjoying crafts provided by NWPB.



Smile! It's watermelon season!



Queen Julianna helping Piggly Wiggly customers select the perfect watermelon!



Queen Julianna with GCWA President Trey Smith and his wife Katie Smith.



Queen Julianna and Coordinator Sarah Jane slicing and serving over 300 students watermelon at lunchtime.



National Queen Olivia with Queen Julianna at the Queen training in Orlando, FL



Illiana Report

Greetings from Illiana!

Planting season is upon us and we are anxious to see what the growing season has in store for our delicious Illiana watermelons!

Queen Abby has been busy this spring learning about our industry so she can promote Indiana and Illinois grown watermelon to the best of her ability. She traveled to Orlando, Florida to participate in Queen Training by the National Watermelon Promotion Board. It was two days filled with industry knowledge, consumer insights, and communication tips that will serve as the backbone of her success as watermelon queen. Huge thank you to Stephanie Barlow and Juliemar Rosado for putting together such a comprehensive training program! Queen Abby's favorite part was meeting with the talented Carmine and Vanessa Gallo. They provided expert communication tips and are always quick to share positive feedback as well as things she should continue to work on. Their guidance is always greatly appreciated!

Queen Abby's first official promotion was the Day on the Farm event put on by the Knox County School Corporation. She met with over 400 - 3rd Graders at the Southwest Purdue Ag Extension greenhouse where she taught them about all things watermelon! Each student got to take home their very own watermelon plant and a few lucky classes got to try on her "princess crown!" It was a wonderful way to get students excited about their community's agricultural industry!

While in Knox County, Queen Abby attended the Knox County Chamber of Commerce awards banquet. The IWA has been a member of the Knox County Chamber for many years, and it gave her a chance to practice her communication skills learned at queen training. She also had the opportunity to take farm tours at DeLisle Farms (Indian Hills) and Freyco Produce. A big thank you to Mr. Cody Smith, current IWA President, for showing Queen Abby around Freyco and to Mr. Lawrence DeLisle for showing her DeLisle Farms! Queen Abby was able to be fully submerged in the planting process, including hand planting, riding the setter, and even driving the setter!

Lastly, congratulations are in order for our queen who graduated with her bachelor's degree in construction management from Murray State University this May. Congratulations Queen Abby, we are so proud of you!

Things will start gearing up for Queen Abby as we enter the Illiana watermelon season this summer. We're looking forward to a wonderful season!

Kind Regards,
Lana Brothers
(314)724-6305
iwapromocoordinator@gmail.com



IWA 1 – Queen Training in sunny Orlando, Florida.



Knox County Day on the Farm event.



IWA 2 – Working with Mr. Carmine Gallo. Thank you NWPB for the training!



Planting seeds of knowledge.



Fun with National Queen Olivia.



Touring DeLisle Farms in Illinois.



Kicking off queen training at the happiest place on earth.



Planting future Indian Hills watermelons.



Disney World fun with a few of the other state queens.



Driving the setter.



Spinning into a wonderful growing season.



Congratulations, graduate!

Mar-Del Report

Spring and watermelon promotions have sprung! Queen Brielle Carter has been on the move this spring. She started out her queen year by attending Queen training in Orlando, Florida. Brielle and the other state queens had an awesome time learning all things watermelon! We cannot thank the National Watermelon Promotion Board enough for hosting a successful weekend for the girls. The weekend set Queen Brielle up for success as she participated in her first promotion! Delaware Agriculture Day! Queen Brielle served watermelon to all those who attended and was able to participate in many activities throughout the event.

It was a double-booked kind of weekend. We were able to send our runner-up to the Maryland Agriculture Day. It was a great success and we're glad we could support both colleges. Queen Brielle also attended Read Across Maryland Day and W.B. Simpson Family Night. Both events were watermelon-filled events! We loved seeing the smiles on their faces as they learn more about watermelon! We are looking forward to upcoming farm tours and seeing more of our watermelon family throughout the Summer! Wishing everyone a safe and Mardelicious Summer!

Terra Eby, Mar-Del Watermelon Promotion Coordinator
 # 302-535-2897
 Mardelqueencoord@aol.com

Queen Brielle participated in the Read Across Maryland event. She read one of our favorite watermelon stories!



Queen Brielle's family came to visit at Ag Day! We always enjoy having family visits at the promotions.



Queen Brielle spent a day at Disney before learning all things watermelon at Queen Training.



Participating in the Ag Olympic games!



Ready to learn!



Watermelon for everyone!



Thank you NWPB for a wonderful training!



Queen Brielle and the UD Blue Hen!



Queen Brielle and National Queen Olivia!



North Carolina Report

Greetings from North Carolina,

North Carolina watermelon season is quickly approaching and we can hardly wait to enjoy our favorite homegrown watermelons. Before we jump into our season, we must introduce you to our 2023 North Carolina Watermelon Queen Miss Gracy Peterson. Queen Gracy was crowned at the 40th Annual North Carolina Watermelon Association Convention in Wrightsville Beach, NC. Queen Gracy is a senior at North Carolina State University majoring in Agricultural Business Management with minors in Spanish, Biology and Poultry Science. Growing up on a farm in eastern North Carolina, she has a true passion for agriculture and we are looking forward to a great year.

Queen Gracy has been busy since her crowning in March and lots more activities are just around the corner. Her first promotion was a Legislative Reception hosted by our NC Department of Agriculture. Queen Gracy shared watermelon fire and ice salsa samples with North Carolina Senators and Representatives from all across the state. The goal of the reception was to emphasize the importance of North Carolina Agriculture to our state's economy and help keep agriculture at the top of their minds with those who reside in more urban areas. Queen Gracy attended AG Day Celebration at Mt. Olive University, Cleveland FFA and Farm Bureau's Home Grown in the Park to help educate students and the general public about our watermelon industry. She also shared watermelon with travelers at two North Carolina Welcome Centers during National Tourism Week.

To ensure the new state Queens have a successful season, the National Watermelon Promotion Board hosted their annual queen training in Orlando, Florida. As always, Stephanie and Juliemar did an excellent job of helping the young ladies understand the industry and how to promote watermelon to any audience. Queen Gracy enjoyed learning how to shape her individual watermelon message from Carmine and Vanessa Gallo. The NWPB also hosted a meet and greet Zoom for Queens and Coordinators with George Szczepanski, NWA Executive Director. This was a great meeting and Queen Gracy really enjoyed learning more about Mr. Szczepanski and the role of the NWA.

We partnered with Food Lion on two events this spring including a store grand opening and a special queen appearance in the Food Lion Pavilion at the Got to Be NC Ag Festival. During the festival, Queen Gracy met attendees and helped them learn more about North Carolina Watermelon and Food Lion.

Queen Gracy recently had two farm tours to see the early stages of watermelon production in our state. Thanks to Howell Farming Company and Fresh-Pik Produce for hosting us. We are excited about all the promotional events to come and we hope to see you during the season.

Sharon Rogers
 Promotions Coordinator
 ncwatermelonqueen@gmail.com
 336-583-9630



Queen Gracy at the NC Department of Agriculture Legislative Reception.



Queen Gracy perfecting her transplanting skills at Howell Farming Company.



Senator Brent Jackson and Queen Gracy at the NC Department of Agriculture Legislative Reception.



Thank you to Frank and Garrett Howell of Howell Farming Company for hosting a farm tour for Queen Gracy.



Fun at the Mt. Olive University Ag Festival.



Queen Gracy had a great time at the Cleveland FFA Ag Day.



Thanks to James and Courtney Sharp for the Fresh-Pik Produce farm tour.



Sharing watermelon samples in the Food Lion Pavilion.



State Queens learning all about watermelon during the NWPB Queen Training in Orlando.



Queen Gracy chatting with the NC Soybean Association at Home Grown in the Park.



State Queens learning all about watermelon during the NWPB Queen Training in Orlando.



Home Grown in the Park Ag Day hosted by Farm Bureau.



Queen Gracy enjoyed the communications training from Carmine and Vanessa Gallo.



Queen Gracy met lots of consumers in the Food Lion Pavilion at the Got to be NC Ag Festival.



Queen Gracy and GCW Queen Julianna practicing their social media video skills at Queen Training.



James Sharp showing Queen Gracy one of his watermelon fields.

South Carolina Report

Welcome to Watermelon Season!!

Queen Training in Orlando, Florida, was a huge success again this year. Queen Ansley Grace attended the training on April 21st – 23rd. She learned many valuable lessons from the experts in attendance, Carmine and Vanessa Gallo, Katelyn Miller, Kel Gibson, Stephanie Barlow, and Juliemar Rosado. Thank you to the National Watermelon Promotion Board for putting on another fantastic training session for our queens.

On May 8th, Queen Ansley filmed a segment of Making It Grow with Amanda McNulty in Sumter, SC, where she prepared a recipe of Watermelon Bruschetta and spoke about the upcoming watermelon season for South Carolina.

The dedication of the Martin Eubanks field at the SC Governor’s School for Agriculture at John De La Howe in McCormick, SC, was held on May 19th. Martin was remembered in such a special way and was celebrated by family, friends and co-workers.

Events in May included watermelon cuttings for field days at the following schools: Southside Christian in Greenville; Mitchell Road Elementary in Greenville; Rudolph Gordon Elementary in Simpsonville; Oakview Elementary in Simpsonville; and Monarch Elementary in Simpsonville. Over 4,000 students enjoyed delicious watermelon during the last two weeks of May. Queen Ansley also did a special appearance to read and discuss watermelon facts and serve slices to the kindergarten classes of Southside Christian. In-store promotions have begun, and will go through mid-July.

Queen Ansley will cross the entire state working to promote SC watermelons with our retailers. There are currently 27 in-store promotions on the calendar. On June 21st – 23rd, farm visits will begin and Queen Ansley will be joined by National Queen Olivia Johnson and National Coordinator Kerri Wiggins. We are also looking forward to our annual Blackville Field Day on July 13th, with Gilbert Miller coordinating the activities for the day.

Wishing all of our watermelon family a happy and prosperous season.

Ann Bryant
 SC Promotions Coordinator
 Abryant028@charter.net
 864-303-3995



Texas Report

Greetings from Texas! I hope this letter finds everyone well and having a great watermelon season.

Queen Savannah started off her year with a first for a Texas Watermelon Queen. She got to attend The Circuit of the America's Race in Austin, Texas with the National Watermelon Queen Olivia Johnson. They toured the area and track with Mr. Chad Chastain who taught them about NASCAR. They also saw driver Ross Chastain do a melon drop from a 250-foot tower after which he did a practice run. The following day they watched Ross race and saw it from the WWEXracing suite where they listened in on Ross and the pit crew with headsets. They are so very grateful to Chad, Ross and Mrs. Susan Chastain for their kindness. The amazing experience was sponsored by Warren Produce, Borders Melons, Wiggins Wholesale, Prukop Farms, Wiggins Farms, and JDI Farms.

The next event that Queen Savannah attended was the Viva Fresh Expo in Dallas, Texas. She met with many people in the watermelon industry, but also other folks who farm the fruits and vegetables we get in our stores. It was a quick trip, but well worth the time.

In April, Queen Savannah and the other state queens attended Queen Training in Orlando, Florida. Once again, the National Watermelon Promotion Board put on a very educational program. It was especially helpful to Queen Savannah, who is new to this industry and wants to learn as much as she can. Carmine and Vanessa Gallo gave a communications and media training segment, then followed it up by doing mock interviews with the girls where each received feedback. They also received training about their roles as watermelons queens from Stephanie Barlow and Juliemar Rosado on social media and promotions. Kel Gibson and Katelyn Miller, both past queens, shared information about how to be the best representatives for their states.

Next, Queen Savannah did her first in-store promotion for HEB. The next day she went on to the HEB Expo in San Antonio where she met with many produce managers who signed up for in-store promotions. We would like to thank the sponsors Nowell and Ranell Borders and Paul Bowling for inviting us to attend and for taking us out for a delicious dinner.

In May, Queen Savannah had her first farm visits in the Rio Grande Valley. She met the folks at Chip Berry Produce, then saw the farms of the Borders family, Mr. Jody Wiggins, Mr. Trevor Prukop and Jackson Wallace. She also saw Mr. Will Beckwith, Mr. Darren Wiggins and his family, Mr. Chip Berry and the folks at Sandia Depot. We want to thank Mr. Bobby Arellano and Mr. Klayton Fultz of Seedway, Mr. Cameron Cruz of Gowan Seed, Mrs. Rosie Aguirre of BASF, Mr. Haedan Hovda of Enza Zaden, Mr. Colton Gammil of Nutrien Ag Solutions and Mr. David Cortez of Simplot for taking the time to visit and show us around. We also met with Mr. Fred Arellano with Ahern Seed who introduced us to Mr. Eduardo Saucedo and Mr. Nelson Escobar.

After the farm tour, Queen Savannah had one more in-store promotion at a HEB in Corpus Christi where she handed out watermelon stickers, recipe cards, and coloring books and pages. She helped people learn about how to pick out a good watermelon and took pictures with happy customers.

We look forward to months of promoting our favorite fruit. In the meantime, I hope you all will have a blessed summer.

Best regards,
Barbara Duda, TWA Coordinator
bcduda62@gmail.com



An exciting first day at the Circuit of the Americas Race.



A happy customer!



Queen Savannah, National Queen Olivia and race car driver, Ross Chastain.



The HEB Expo with sponsors Nowell and Ranell Borders and Paul Bowling.



Meeting new people at the Viva Fresh Expo reception.



Queen Savannah visited with many HEB produce managers.



Queen Savannah meets Meagan McKenna and Juliemar Rosado of the NWPB.



A farm visit to the Borders' farm.



Queen training mock interview with Carmine Gallo.



Getting a chance to taste some red and yellow watermelon with Trevor Prukop and Jackson Wallace.



Stephanie Barlow and Juliemar Rosado with all the girls after a great day of queen training.



It was a great day seeing the Wiggins family at one of their farms.



Queen Savannah's first in-store promotion.



Queen Savannah's in-store promotion in Corpus Christi.

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