



Cucumbers - Does Trellising Improve Yield?

by

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Commercial growers and home gardeners in the “lower 48” often go to great lengths to train cucumbers on a trellis. Vines get greater exposure to light, thus increasing photosynthesis; the fruit is held off the ground possibly minimizing disease; fruit ripening is more uniform; and fruit yield may be more than five times that of untrellised plants. Because vines do not sprawl all over the ground, plant spacings can be closer both within and between rows.

With all of these advantages in mind, we conducted a small experiment in the Family Food Garden to learn if trellising of the slicing cucumber, ‘Early Pride’, would benefit Alaska gardeners. Soils were fertilized with 1000 lb/acre 10-20-20. Six-week-old transplants were planted through IRT-76 mulch on June 6. Three rows of plants each contained three untrellised plants and three plants trellised on twine supported between metal fenceposts. Plants were spaced one foot apart within rows.

Fruit began to mature on August 3, and harvest continued until August 26 (table below). Plots experienced a light frost on August 23, but vines were not injured. Total fruit yield for the season was similar for trellised and untrellised plants. Although the untrellised plants showed a total yield in fruit number and weight that were slightly higher than the trellised plants, variation among all plants was so great that any differences are insignificant. We did not experience the very high yields reported by growers in lower latitudes probably because our season is so short and fruit ripening occurs within a one-month period before frost kills the vines. Trellising is a labor-intensive task requiring individual vines to be tied up several times during the summer. Nevertheless, trellising will be useful where garden space is a premium.

Fruit yield of ‘Early Pride’ slicing cucumbers on trellised and untrellised plants

Harvest Date	# of fruit per plant*		Yield per plant (grams)	
	Trellised	Untrellised	Trellised	Untrellised
Aug 3	0.9	0.4	207.8	104.8
Aug 5	0.3	0.8	79.1	206.8
Aug 9	2.8	4.2	736.2	961.5
Aug 12	3.1	3.6	775.5	840.8
Aug 15	2.7	3.1	659.1	781.2
Aug 19	1.5	2.3	300.6	531.6
Aug 23	3.9	3.8	759.6	805.6
Aug 25	1.2	0.8	182.6	172.8
TOTAL	16.3	18.9	3716.9	4405.1

*Three plants and three replicates per treatment.

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