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Cherry Tomato: An Underexploited Salad Vegetable

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Abstract

Cherry tomato is a potential vegetable crop which is used for salad purpose. It is rich in vitamins and flavonoids and has high demand in big cities. It is a warm season crop and requires high temperature. During winter season, it can be grown under protected condition as off-season vegetable to earn good profit. A number of varieties both from private and public sector are available in the market for cultivation. The detail information of its usage and scientific cultivation has been compiled in this article.

Introduction

Cherry tomato cultivated since at least the early 1800's and thought to have originated in Peru and Northern Chile. The cherry tomato is regarded as a botanical variety of the cultivated berry, *Solanum lycopersicum* var. *cerasiforme* (Nesbitt and Tanksley, 2002). The modern-day common commercial cherry tomato was developed in Israel. Cherry tomatoes have been popular in the United States since at least 1919. Recipes using cherry tomatoes can be found in articles dating back to 1967.

Description

Cherry tomato is a very small variety of tomato that range in size from a thumb tip up to the size of a golf ball, and can range from being spherical to slightly oblong in shape (Nesbitt and Tanksley, 2002). The more oblong ones often share characteristics with plum tomatoes, and are known as grape tomatoes. Cherry tomato is rich in Vitamin C and also includes a good content of Vitamin A and fibre (John *et al.*, 2005). A 100 g cherry tomato provides 14 Kcal energy, 1 g protein, 0.2 g of total lipid. It also contains sufficient amount of sodium.

Varieties

Yellow Cherry, Tumbling Tom Red, Husky Cherry Red, Sweet Chelsea, Yellow Pear, Sun Gold, Sweet Cherry 100, Porters Dark Cherry, Sweet Olive and Christmas Grape are name of varieties of cherry tomato. All of the above varieties are red except Yellow Cherry and Yellow Pear (Yellow) and Sun Gold (Orange) having diameter ranged from ½ to 1½ inches. Most of the varieties are round and of determinate growth habit (Figure 1). The Super Sweet 100 is a hybrid cultivar popular in America. It is resistant to both Fusarium and Verticillium wilt (Sucheta *et al.*, 2004).

Scientific Cultivation

Cherry tomato is a relative warm season crop. Plants grow well at the temperature range of 19-30 °C. It also requires plenty of sunshine but low humidity

and continuous rain in the hot weather will increase disease problems such as bacterial wilt, blight, rot and fruit cracking. The location should be free from nematodes and other soil borne diseases. Continuous cropping should be avoided because of bacterial wilt and other soil borne problems. It is best to rotate tomato with rice and legume crops and wait for 3 years before plant it again on the same ground. As the seed of Cherry tomato is small, it is better to raise seedling using pro-trays and coco peat as growing media. It takes 20-30 days from sowing to transplanting. Seedlings should be transplanted at 5-6 true leaves stage at spacing 60 cm apart in double rows on each bed spaced at 1.5-2 m wide. Irrigation must be started immediately after the transplanting. Manuring of the crop should be done at the rate of 8-10 t per acre with well decomposed compost. A basal dose of 100 kg nutrient mix of 10:26:26 (N:P:K) supplemented with neem

cake (100 kg) and secondary nutrients (50 kg) is required for good growth. Nutrient mix 10:26:26 can be repeated at every 15 days interval till end of crop-life. Additional micro nutrient sprays can be given as per the deficiency symptoms. It is sensitive to water stress during fruit setting period. When the weather is hot and dry flowers and fruits drop easily. Therefore irrigation should be applied frequently to maintain a steady growth. Depending on the type of variety, keep the height of bamboo and wire support. 3 to 4 stem prunings are recommended to regulate the plant growth habit. Once achieve desired size, harvest the fruits in early morning (when temp. is low) by keeping calyx if possible (it can give attractive look to the fruit). Grade the fruits as per size and quality. Discard the abnormal shape/ size, diseased, cracked fruits. Pack the fruits in ventilated boxes and send to the market.



a) Sun Gold



b) Yellow cherry



c) Sweet Chelsea



d) Husky Cherry Red



e) Yellow pear



f) Porters Dark Cherry

Figure 1: Popular varieties of cherry tomato

Conclusion

Cherry tomato is generally sweeter to common tomato and is best as salad vegetable. It has good potential in export market. A lot of variation has been reported in its color and flavour which make it more attractive for hotel and restaurant use also. It can suitably be grown during off

season under protected condition for high yield and return.

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