



## *Lettuce Cultivars for Warm Season 99-13*

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A non-replicated lettuce variety trial was conducted during the early summer of 1999 at the Suwannee Valley REC near Live Oak, FL. The trial was conducted to evaluate several cultivars for bitterness in the hot season. Specialty lettuces are very popular at restaurants and local retail markets, especially community farmer's markets. Many cultivars produce high yield and excellent quality during the cool season in North Florida. However, as temperatures increase several cultivars become very bitter resulting in unmarketable product.

This trial was conducted in a Lakeland fine sand using a full-bed white-on-black polyethylene mulch and drip irrigation system of production. The final beds were 36 in. wide and 6 in. high. Four-week-old transplants were used to establish the plots on May 5, 1999. Each bed contained two rows 12 in. apart and plants were spaced 12 in. within each row.

Samples were harvested from each plot on June 7, 1999. The same two people rated each sample on a 1-5 scale with 1= no bitterness and 5= very bitter (Table 1). A rating of 4 or 5 would determine the cultivar to be unmarketable due to bitterness alone. Ratings of 1 or 2 would determine those cultivars to be of excellent quality and marketability in relation to bitterness.

In general, all butterhead cultivars ('Ermosa', 'Carmona', and 'Red Rouge') were all very mild in flavor with very little or no bitterness. The only lollo type cultivar, 'Lollo Rosa', was very bitter. Other types of lettuce (looseleaf, oakleaf, and romaine) were more variable depending on cultivar (See Table 1).

This trial demonstrated several cultivars of specialty lettuces can be grown well into the summer in North Florida to extend the marketing season. Cultural practices including the use of white-on-black polyethylene mulch may be important in extending the lettuce season.

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**Table 1** Bitterness ratings for several cultivars and types of lettuce grown in the early summer of 1999 near Live Oak, FL.

| <u>Cultivar</u>      | <u>Type</u> | <u>Color</u> | <u>Bitterness Rating<sup>z</sup></u> |
|----------------------|-------------|--------------|--------------------------------------|
| Black Seeded Simpson | Loose       | Green        | 3                                    |
| Redina               | Loose       | Red          | 5                                    |
| Two Star             | Loose       | Green        | 2                                    |
| Waldmans Dark Green  | Loose       | Green        | 4                                    |
| Lollo Rosa           | Lollo       | Red edges    | 5                                    |
| Red Rouge            | Butterhead  | Red          | 2                                    |
| Ermosa               | Butterhead  | Green        | 1                                    |
| Carmona              | Butterhead  | Red          | 1                                    |
| Cerize               | Oakleaf     | Red          | 2                                    |
| Saladbowl            | Oakleaf     | Green        | 2                                    |
| Red Saladbowl        | Oakleaf     | Red          | 3                                    |
| Royal Oak            | Oakleaf     | Green        | 3                                    |
| Cocarde              | Oakleaf     | Red tint     | 2                                    |
| Kalura               | Romaine     | Green        | 2                                    |
| Rosalita             | Romaine     | Red tint     | 2                                    |
| Paris Island         | Romaine     | Green        | 3                                    |
| Rouge D'hiver        | Romaine     | Red tint     | 3                                    |
| Medallion            | Romaine     | Green        | 2                                    |

<sup>z</sup> = Bitterness ratings were given on a scale of 1-5; 1=no bitterness, 5=very bitter.