

Mirliton Growing FAQ Sheet by Lance Hill of Mirliton.Org (revised 2018)

1. What is a mirliton?

A mirliton is member of the squash family and is known in most of the world as Chayote. Its scientific name is *Sechium Edule*. It is a prolific growing, climbing vine that can send out stems as far as 35 feet. In Louisiana, the *Sechium edule* is known by the French name, Mirliton, pronounced “Mel-Luh-Tawn.”
2. How much fruit can a mirliton plant produce?

The mirliton is a perennial, meaning that if it is protected from freezing and pests, it can return every year for several year. In the first year, the vine will produce up to 40 fruit, about 10-15 ounces each. Every year after that the production doubles depending on root space and vine growth space. You will get a spring and fall crop.
3. Can mirlitons be grown from the mirliton/chayote fruit sold in stores?

No. Almost all stores and roadside vendors sell mirlitons imported from Latin America where they are varieties raised at 4,000 feet and are nearly impossible to successfully grow in our sea-level climate with high heat and humidity and leads to disease. The only mirlitons that will grow in the Southern United States climate are locally-grown heirloom varieties that have been handed down for generations.
4. Where can I get heirloom Louisiana mirliton seeds?

Visit the photo link on our website at www.mirliton.org for photos and a list of heirloom varieties. Contact us at Lance@mirliton.org for a list of seed vendors.
5. How do I plant Mirliton Seeds?

Plant the entire fruit as seed after the fruit sprouts a stem about three inches long. Plant the seeds sprouting-end down with about 1/3 of the seed above ground. You can directly plant seeds in the fall or container plant them over the winter and transplant into to ground in April. Plant several seeds to improve your odds making it through the first summer since heat & disease takes its toll. Don't overwinter sprouts in paper since plants need soil for a good root structure before transplanting into the ground.
6. Where should I plant the mirliton?

Mirlitons are very sensitive to overwatering. Make hills of good-draining soil using about 9 cubic feet of a mix of commercial potting soil and compose, manure, and sphagnum moss. See the Mirlitons.org photo site for recommended soil mixes and trellis systems. We suggest a 5' high narrow trellis so you can scout for pests, treat top and bottom for diseases, and use overhead sprinklers to prevent early frost damage.
7. What is the key to successful mirliton growing?
 1. Use only certified heirloom seed.
 - 2 Grow in well-drained soil with adequate root space (roots grow in 6 feet in all directions).
 3. Babysit your plant. Mirlitons need daily attention to protect from over or under-watering, pests, disease, and implement early-frost protection.