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Yacon Variety Comparisons

Many people ask for guidance with choosing a yacon variety. Yacon is not always an easy plant to characterize. Many traits vary quite a bit from one year to the next. For example, I used to list New Zealand and Cajamarca as short varieties, but have since discovered that in some years they can actually be among the tallest. I will continue to refine these comparisons, but I think they are generally pretty reliable. Newer varieties will probably change more than older ones.

Agronomic Traits

Variety	Tuberization	Flowering	Height	Yield
Bekya	Early	Early	Short	High
Blanco	Late	Late	Intermediate	Low
Bogachiel	Early	Early	Tall	High
Cajamarca	Intermediate	Intermediate	Intermediate	High
Kalaloch	Early	Early	Intermediate	Intermediate
Late Red	Intermediate	Intermediate	Intermediate	Intermediate
Morado	Intermediate	Early	Intermediate	High
New Zealand	Intermediate	Early	Tall	High
Quinault	Intermediate	Early	Intermediate	Intermediate
Rojo	Late	Late	Intermediate	Low
Rose	Late	Late	Intermediate	Low
Sol Duc	Intermediate	Intermediate	Intermediate	High

Tuberization ranges from early to late. Early varieties yield well at about 5 months, while late varieties need 7 or 8 months depending on climate.

Height ranges from short to tall, as measured in our climate. Many varieties grow taller in warmer climates, so your results might not match ours exactly. If you are in a tropical climate or a latitude with extra long days, like Alaska, your results might be totally different. Short varieties reach about 5 feet tall in 8 months and tall varieties may reach 7 feet or more.

Yield ranges from low to high, again measured in our climate. Your yields will likely be lower than ours, although they will probably be proportional. We define a high yield as a full root ball (tubers and crown) that weighs 25 pounds or more and low as 15 pounds or less. Unless you are growing for market, you probably won't find this particularly significant. Even low yielding varieties produce a lot of tubers.

Flowering ranges from early to late. Early flowering begins at about 6 months and late flower at about 8 months or later. Flowering only matters if you want to try yacon breeding or you just like the flowers.

Culinary Traits

Variety	Initial Sweetness	Max Sweetness	Initial Color	Full Color	Flesh Color
Bekya	Least	Intermediate	Tan	Tan	White
Blanco	Intermediate	Intermediate	Tan	Tan+red	White
Bogachiel	Most	Most	Tan+red	Red	Yellow
Cajamarca	Intermediate	Most	Tan	Tan+red	White
Kalaloch	Intermediate	Intermediate	Tan	Tan	White
Late Red	Intermediate	Most	Tan+red	Tan+red	Yellow
Morado	Intermediate	Most	Red+tan	Red	White
New Zealand	Intermediate	Most	Tan+red	Red	White
Quinault	Intermediate	Most	Red+tan	Red	White
Rojo	Intermediate	Intermediate	Tan+red	Tan+red	White
Rose	Intermediate	Intermediate	Tan+red	Tan+red	White
Sol Duc	Most	Most	Red+tan	Red	White

Sweetness is an absolute scale for both the level of sweetness at harvest and after at least three weeks of exposure to sunlight. Some varieties are already fairly sweet at harvest, but most get sweeter with exposure to sunlight. Some change more than others. Flavor is subjective, but I think of yacon as a combination of flavors of pear and celery. Most sweet varieties are more pear than celery, intermediate are about an even balance, and least sweet varieties are more celery than pear.

Tuber color is quite variable and depends on climate and maturity of the plant. Some varieties are different here every year, while others are more consistent. I'm reporting what we expect to see here, but what you see may be quite a bit different, particularly if your climate is very different or if your growing season is short. New Zealand is a great example. Some years, the tubers are almost all tan. Other years, they are almost all red. And in still other years, they are intermediate. The only consistent thing is that they will turn fully red with several weeks of exposure to sunlight. Varieties that undergo a significant change in color can be useful because it is an indication that the variety is reaching its maximum sweetness.

Flesh color in yacon is most commonly white, but other colors are possible. Flesh color is usually described as yellow, orange, or pink. These are not intense colors and may set the wrong expectation. Bogachiel and Late Red have a color that is usually described as "orange," but that seems rather exaggerated to me. It is certainly a much darker color compared to the white fleshed varieties, but I am not really sure how to describe it. You can call it yellow or orange or even brown and not be too far off the mark. Yacon flesh may also be a light pink or white with light pink regions, but I have yet to see a variety with that coloring.

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