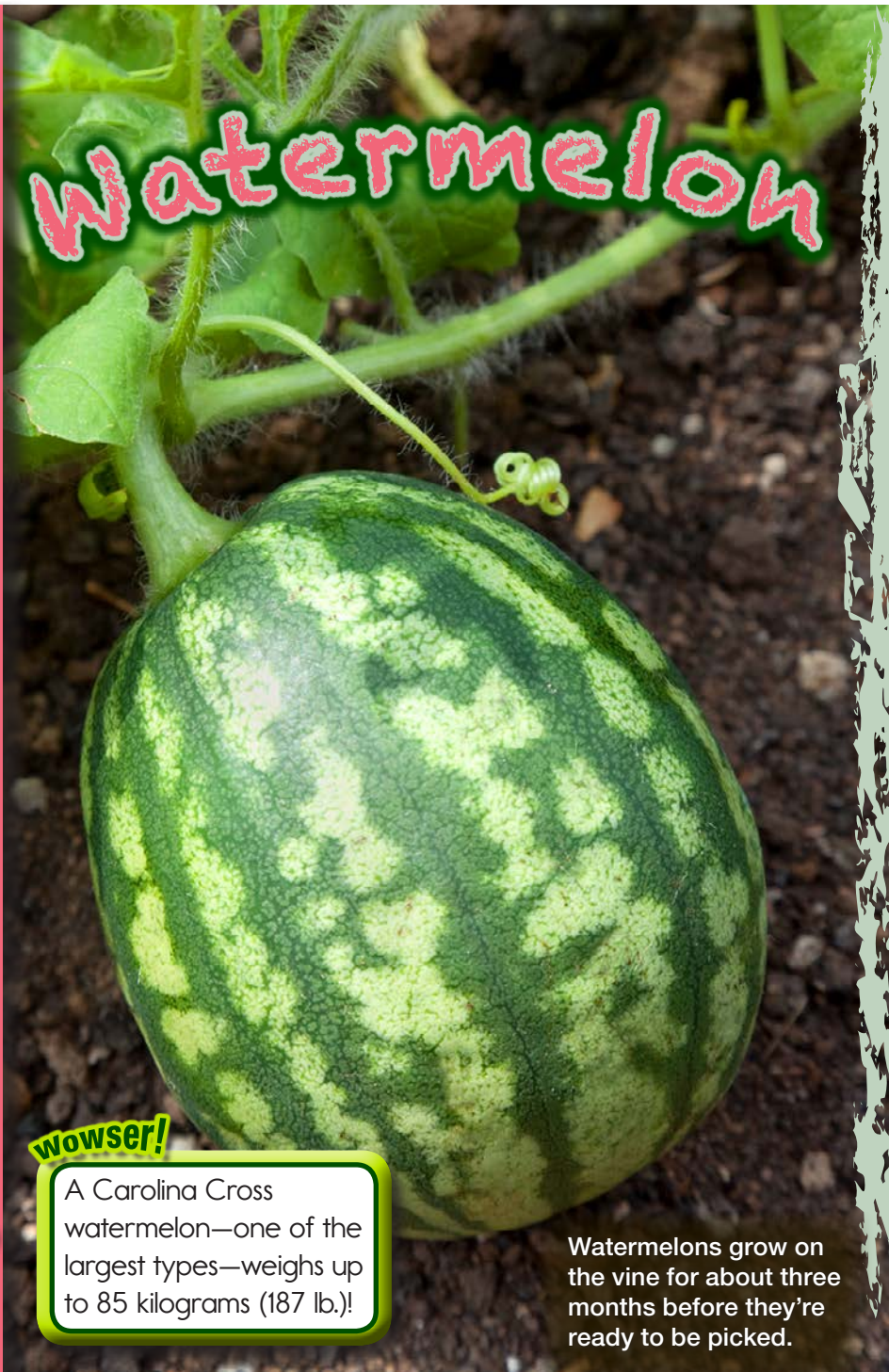


# Watermelon



**wowser!**

A Carolina Cross watermelon—one of the largest types—weighs up to 85 kilograms (187 lb.)!

Watermelons grow on the vine for about three months before they're ready to be picked.

## Shape-Shifting Fruit

Imagine biting into a sweet, juicy watermelon. *Yum!* Before this delicious fruit reaches your plate, it grows on a vine. The watermelon plant uses sunlight, water, and carbon dioxide from the air to make its own food through photosynthesis. Then the vine uses some of this food to make fruit. The watermelon fruit is oblong, like a squished circle. No, it's round like a ball. No, wait, it's . . . square?

Actually, watermelons come in all those shapes. The first watermelons were round. But they rolled around and got bruised as they traveled from farms to markets. In 1954, a scientist developed an oblong watermelon that was easier to stack.

In the early 1980s, Japanese farmers began growing square watermelons to save space. The farmers put the melons in square glass cases as they grew. These square watermelons are the perfect size and shape for refrigerator shelves—and they taste just as good as the round ones!



It takes extra work to grow square watermelons.



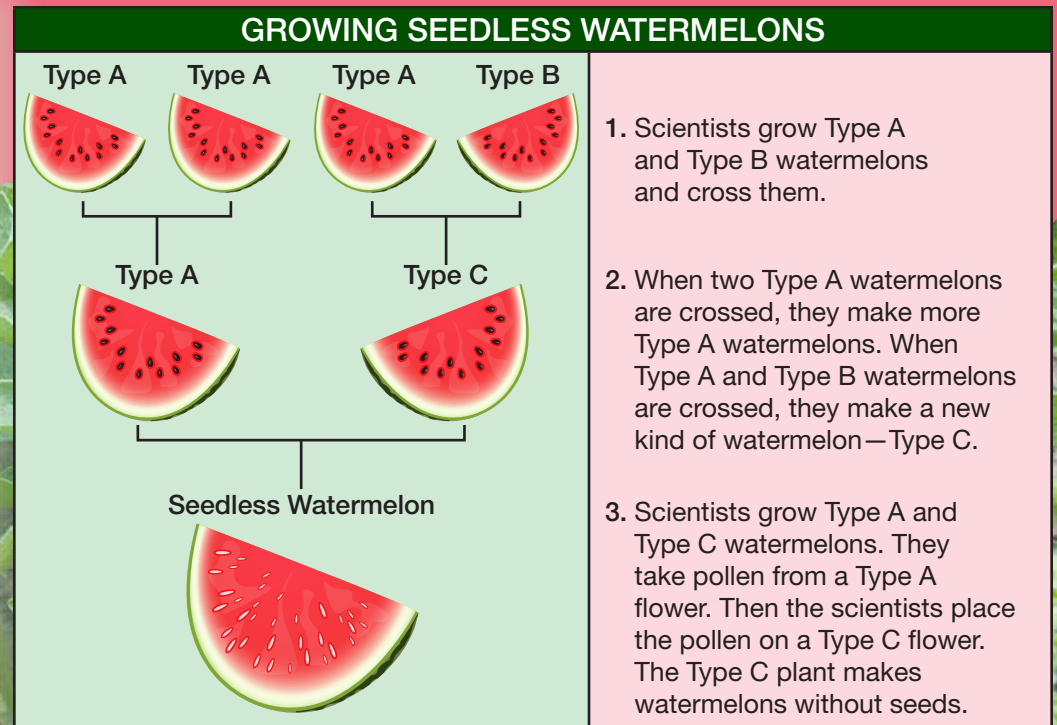
# Seeds or No Seeds?

Long ago, all watermelons had big seeds inside. But today, most watermelons at the grocery store don't have seeds. Why not?

Watermelon plants have many kinds of cells. Some cells help the plant grow and develop. But plants also have many cells to help them reproduce. When living things reproduce, the offspring are a little different from their parents. Scientists use these differences to make seedless watermelons.

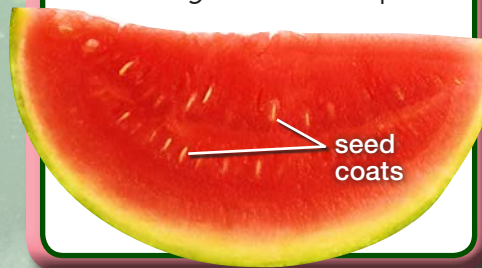
About fifty years ago, plant scientists took *pollen*, which plants use to reproduce, from one kind of watermelon. Then they put the pollen on the flower of another kind of watermelon.

The plant that received the pollen made new watermelon fruits. Those fruits had seeds. Next, scientists planted seeds from these new watermelons. The seeds grew into plants. Scientists found that the fruit of these watermelon plants didn't have seeds. The seedless watermelon was born!



## DO YOU KNOW?

Some seedless watermelons have what look like small white seeds. These are called *seed coats*. They are empty inside and can't grow into new plants.



Watermelons with seeds (left) are called *seeded*. Watermelons without seeds (right) are called *seedless*.