

Peppers (*Capsicum*)



Full Sun



Growing Peppers

Peppers are bushy plants generally treated as annuals in cold climates, though in warm places they are true perennials. The fruit is attractive when used with other vegetables for table arrangements and in salads. It provides a touch of color as well as nutritive value. Peppers are a fine source of vitamins A and C.

Moon phase planting and controlled conditions will produce a good crop of peppers both sweet and hot. The sweet varieties are excellent for slicing, salads and stuffing. Hot peppers are good for sauces, flavoring and pickling, either fresh or dried.

The planting and culture of Peppers

Since the pepper is a very tender vegetable and one which requires a long growing season, the plants must be started inside about eight to ten weeks before the garden planting date. One packet of any variety will provide more than enough plants for the average family.

Starting Pepper seeds

Seed should be started in flats or flowerpots in a sunny window, hotbed, or a cold frame. Put a layer of pebbles or coarse material for drainage in the bottom of flats or flowerpots, and fill to 1/2 inch of the top with a finely screened mixture of one part sand, one part loam and one part compost.

Keep the containers evenly moist until germination has occurred and the seedlings are growing well. When the plants have at least their first pair of true leaves, move to flats, allowing each plant at least two inches in all directions. To prevent wilting and sudden death of young plants from fungus infections, be very careful not to overwater, especially during damp cloudy weather.

When the weather has become warm, with no danger of frost, and the moon is in its proper phase set the pepper plants in a sunny location in the garden in rows two to three feet apart, with 18 to 24 inches of space between the individual plants. They will grow in any well-prepared garden soil and do not require a great deal of fertility. During very dry weather give the plants an occasional, thorough watering. Mulching the plants with grass clippings or hay will save work by smothering the weeds, and by holding moisture in the soil.

Because the pepper plant's requirements are so similar to those of the tomato many gardeners, when setting out a planting of tomatoes, substitute pepper plants here and there throughout the planting. Peppers are also often grown amid flowers and shrubs.

Insects and diseases that effect Peppers

Peppers are not especially susceptible to insect pests. Sometimes when the plants are first set out, cutworms cause damage, but they easily controlled by placing cardboard collars in the

ground around the stems.

The most serious disease is mosaic, a virus infection. Leaves become malformed, mottled in color, and the plants are stunted and eventually die. Remove and destroy affected plants at once. Wash hands and tools before touching healthy plants.

Pulverized dry peppers, when mixed with water and a little soap, make a good insect repellent. Caterpillars, ants, spiders, and tomato worms will be discouraged by an application of this mixture.

Pepper varieties

Peppers are classified as either sweet or hot. The sweet-fleshed varieties are perfect for slicing, salads and stuffing. California Wonder, Pimento, King of the North and Canape Hybrids are good sweet varieties. Bell Boy Hybrid and Yolo Wonder, both sweet varieties, have the advantage of being resistant to tobacco mosaic.

Red Chili, Long Red Cayenne, Hungarian Wax, and Tabasco are good hot varieties. Hot peppers are good for sauces, flavoring and pickling, either fresh or dried.