

Peppers



Peppers are easy to grow but have a long growing season and need to be grown in warm conditions.

Planting: Start seed indoors 8 weeks before you want to set out the plants. Keep the seedlings above 21°C. Transplant outdoors a month after the last frost. Choose a location where the plants will receive about 6 to 8 hours of sun daily. Peppers like a well-aerated soil. Till the soil to a depth of approximately 1 foot and add compost. Place the plants 12-18" apart and give them a shot of starter fertilizer. Do not overfeed with nitrogen for this will give you lush foliage but little fruit.

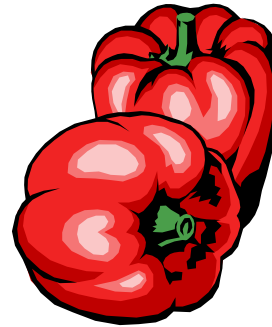
Watering: Peppers need even, moderate moisture around the roots. Only water with a drip irrigation system or soaker hose as watering overhead when plants are in bloom will wash

away pollen. No pollen means no fruit.

Mulching: Spread a thick but light mulch such as grass clippings or hay 4" from the base of the plant. Mulching helps conserve moisture and helps keep fruit clean when mature plants topple over.

Container gardening: Peppers will grow well in any container with proper drainage holes. They are self-pollinating so you do not need multiple plants for bearing fruit.

Harvesting: Harvest fruit often so that the plants will continue to produce. Use a sharp knife and leave a short piece of stem attached to the fruit. This will allow the peppers to be stored longer. Never try to pull the fruit off the branch as you may break the branch. Pick off some of the fruit while they are still green. This will push the plant to channel energy into the remaining fruits, making them sweeter until they finally ripen into vibrant green, orange, red or yellow peppers.



Frost: Harvest all the ripe peppers and cover the plants with blankets. This will

protect the plants and allow them approximately one more week to produce. Or you can pull the plants up by the roots and hang them in a cool spot indoors – the peppers on the plant will continue to ripen for up to a week on the uprooted plants.

Cooking :

Remember to be careful when you are working with hot peppers. The "hottest" parts of the fruit, the seeds and membranes, can irritate your skin. Wear thin plastic gloves and keep your hands and pepper juice away from your eyes and mouth. Cooking the seeds and membranes will take away some of the pepper's fieriness, but eat with caution!

