



Growing Peppers

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If you are a fan of peppers you should be growing them! They are easy to grow and you will be rewarded with the freshest flavor possible. I personally love growing peppers and like to pickle them, or marinate and dry them.

Peppers are packed with nutrition and are a great addition to soups, stews, salads, and relishes.

There are literally hundreds of varieties of peppers to choose from. They are a warm-season vegetable best started from seed indoors in winter and then transplanted in the garden come early summer. They will not tolerate frost and won't grow in cold, wet soil. Plant seedlings once nighttime temperatures are above 55 degrees. Plant them about 18-24 inches apart in a well-drained, rich soil. Peppers like a steady supply of moisture but do not like wet feet so good drainage is a must. Soggy soil will cause the flowers and immature fruits to fall to the ground. That's one reason peppers are a great container vegetable.

Peppers generally don't have many pests but keep an eye out for aphids, and when buying seedlings do not buy any plants with leaf spotting, a sure sign of disease.

Peppers are somewhat slow growing but you can harvest them at any stage. Some bell peppers can be ripened to full maturity which will lend a red, orange, yellow, or brown color. Other bell peppers, such as purple, lilac, and light yellow turn colors when they are immature and should be harvested before they turn red. Of course, the green variety is harvested when green and firm. Hot peppers should be left to mature to the red stage, unless you want green chiles. The redder a pepper is the more beta-carotene it contains.

Always use caution when handling hot peppers.

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