

Pepper

Capsicum sp.



Peppers are delicious fresh, sautéed, smoked or dried. They come in a wide array of colors, shapes and flavors. They thrive in containers and in the ground. Peppers need heat to develop and ripen. Hot peppers grown in the Pacific Northwest will not have the same fire as those grown in New Mexico because of our mild climate.



SITE REQUIREMENTS

Peppers require at least 7 hours of direct sun and rich, well-drained soil. Sweet peppers prefer a bit of shade from the hottest sun in the peak of summer. Prepare the planting area by mixing 2-3" of composted manure and lime into the top 4-6" of the soil. Mix in an all-purpose granular fertilizer and lime in the bottom of each planting hole.

PLANTING

You can start seeds indoors mid February through March, 6-8 weeks before desired transplanting date. Sow seeds ¼" deep and cover with a fine layer of soil. Bottom heat will help them sprout faster. Transplant seedlings into 4" pots when they have two sets of true leaves. Harden off your seedlings two weeks before desired transplanting date.

Peppers thrive in warm, dry weather and are best planted outdoors late May through June when soil is 65°F. It helps to warm the soil first by covering the planting area with 1-2" of compost, plastic mulch or a cold frame. Pepper growth is stunted by air temperatures below 55°F, so it is best to protect new plants with a cold frame, cloche or other product until temperatures are consistently warmer. Set out plants 12-18" apart in rows 2-3' apart. Water in new plants with liquid seaweed or B1.

Keep new beds well weeded and slightly moist. You can cover new plantings with floating row cover for 3-4 weeks to prevent flea beetles and other insects. Plastic or organic mulches can help heat the soil, retain moisture and prevent blight. It may help to stake your plants to help support heavy fruit.

WATER REQUIREMENTS

How much water your plants will require depends on the soil and weather. Peppers are somewhat drought tolerant, but yield best with a steady supply of moisture. Weekly slow, deep (2-3 gallons) waterings are ideal. A consistent water supply can help prevent blossom end rot. Drip irrigation is the best way to provide even moisture, while having fewer disease issues.

FERTILIZING

Peppers are medium to heavy feeders and benefit from having a mild liquid fertilizer every two weeks once the fruits begin to appear. Another option is to side dress plants once flowers appear with a composted manure.

HARVESTING & STORAGE

Harvest when fruit has reached mature size and color. Any type of sweet pepper can be harvested when it is full sized but still green to get green peppers. Cut fruit with a 1" stem for maximum storage time. Peppers can store 2-3 weeks in the refrigerator. All peppers can also be dried, frozen, canned or pickled.

PESTS & DISEASES

Good gardening practices such as crop rotation, drip irrigation, proper planting time, floating row covers and removal of entire plants when harvest is done all help prevent many pests and diseases.

*Aphids are perhaps the most prevalent pest on peppers. Their damage often appears as curled, deformed, and yellow leaves. You may find colonies of green aphids on the under sides of the leaves and growing tips. Also, a sticky sap on leaves and stems and white aphid skeletons can be visible. There are numerous control methods to combat aphids such as insecticidal soap.

*Cutworm can often mow down all new transplants in one night. Spinosad is an organic control for cut worms.

*Snails and slugs leave large holes in leaves or eat new transplants when they feed at night. They often leave iridescent trails on leaves and the ground. Slug baits and beer traps are just two ways to control them.

*Flea beetles chew dozens of tiny holes in the leaves. For prevention cover new seed beds with floating row cover until plants are 8" tall. Dust with diatomaceous earth or spray with pyrethrin.

*Spider mite damage appears as many, white pin sized dots all over leaves, or yellowing leaves. Tiny red mites will be on the under sides of leaves and webbing may be present along the main veins. Spider mites are most prevalent in hot dry weather. Spray with insecticidal soap three times at 7 day intervals. Predatory mites, Cimmamite and pyrethrins are also effective.

*Early blight begins as dark brown spots ringed in yellow. The fungus overwinters in the soil and infection can be greatly reduced by using plastic mulch and avoiding over head irrigation. Pick off infected areas and spray with copper or Serenade to help reduce the spread of the fungus.

*Tobacco mosaic virus appears as yellow, mottled, deformed leaves. There is no cure. Remove and destroy infected plants.

*Late blight is common in the cool wet conditions of spring. It appears as dark spots on leaves and stems which grow quickly. Plastic mulch and avoiding over head irrigation will greatly reduce the spread of this fungus which over winters in the soil. Copper and Serenade can help slow the spread of the fungus.

*Verticillium wilt first appears as yellowing leaves on one side of a stem. Cross sections of the stems near the base of the plant will show interior discoloring. There is no cure, remove and destroy infected plants. Replant in a new area.

*Blossom end rot appears as brown spots on the end of the fruit. It is caused by a lack of calcium availability or water stress. Adding lime to the soil before you plant and providing consistent moisture can prevent the problem. Calcium sprays can also help.

VARIETIES

Portland Nursery carries around 30 varieties of sweet peppers and 50 varieties of hot peppers. Please refer to our variety listings for full descriptions. Below we have listed some of our favorites.

Best Producing Bell Peppers

California Wonder
Goldenbell
Gypsy
Northstar
Valencia

Great Heirloom Sweet Peppers

Corno di Toro
Healthy
Nardello
Sweet Cheese

Hottest Peppers

Habanero
Habanero Caribbean Red
Jamacian Hot Chocolate
Lemon Drop
Thai

Heirloom Hot Peppers

Anaheim
Black Hungarian
Fish
Lemon Drop
Long Red Cayenne

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