

HERE'S A PEPPER, THERE'S A PEPPER

GARDENING SEASON

August to October

CHOOSING TIPS

Choose peppers that are firm, smooth, and brightly colored. Peppers should be heavier than they look and able to stand up straight. Peppers also have no smell. Do not choose peppers if:

- ★ They are dull or wrinkled
- ★ They have damp patches on the skin

STORAGE

Place peppers in a plastic bag and store in the refrigerator for up to one week.

PREPARATION

Peppers can be halved, quartered, or sliced and used in salads, vegetable platters, or sautéed with onions and garlic. To stuff peppers, cut off the top and remove the inner core and seeds.

To roast:

Set the oven to 425°F. Cut the peppers in half and remove the seeds, place the peppers in a pan, sprinkle with olive oil, and roast in the oven for about 30 minutes. Turn occasionally.

KEY NUTRIENTS

- ★ Fiber to prevent constipation.
- ★ Potassium to maintain normal blood pressure.
- ★ Vitamin C for healthy gums, skin and blood.
- ★ Vitamin A for vision, healthy skin, and resistance to infection.

RECIPES

Sweet Pepper Sauce

- ★ 2 large red bell peppers
- ★ 4 large garlic cloves, peeled
- Salt and ground black pepper, to taste.



Put peppers into a saucepan with enough water to almost cover. Bring to a boil, then simmer until tender. Remove peppers from water, reserve water, and discard stems and seeds. Chop and place in a blender or food processor. Add garlic to the peppers, together with 1 cup of the cooking water, and blend to puree. Transfer to a clean saucepan. Season with salt and pepper and reheat gently. Serve over pasta. Serves 4; 15 Cal and no fat in the sauce.

Sunshine Salad

- ★ 5 cups spinach (packaged), washed and dried well
- ★ 1 whole cucumber, sliced
- ★ 1/2 red onion, sliced thin
- ★ 1/2 red pepper, sliced
- ★ 2 oranges, peeled and chopped into bite-size pieces
- ★ 1/3 cup light vinaigrette salad dressing

Toss all ingredients together in a large bowl. Add the dressing and toss again. Serve immediately. Serves 5; 123 Cal; 8 g fat.

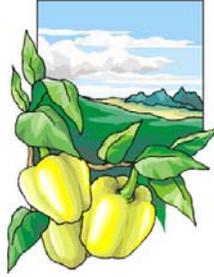


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Growing Peppers in Wisconsin

Peppers originated in Mexico and Central America. Peppers along with tomatoes, potatoes, and eggplants belong to the Solanaceae (nightshade)

family. Peppers, like tomatoes, are warm-season perennials that are grown as annuals in cold climates, however they are even more susceptible to cold injury. Peppers are self-pollinated by insects, however, some cross pollination can take place which CAN turn a mild pepper hot.



Planting Peppers

- Start plants from seed 6 to 8 weeks prior to field transplanting
- Protect plants if temperature may drop below 40° to 45° F
- Move flats to a cold frame before transplanting
- Transplant outside in early June
- Fruit set occurs between 75° to 86°F
- Full sun is recommended
- Space between rows: 30 to 36 inches
- Space between plants: 18 to 24 inches

Soil and Fertility

- Light, warm, well drained fertile soils
- Avoid muck soils
- Follow soil test recommendations
- Acceptable pH is 5.5 to 7.5, above 6.0 is recommended

Under optimum soil test levels apply...

- 3.0 oz of nitrogen per 100 sq ft
- 0.4 oz of phosphate per 100 sq ft
- 1.9 oz of potassium per 100 sq ft

Selecting Pepper Varieties

Pepper fruit may be green, yellow, red, purple, or brown. Peppers vary in their amount of capsaicin, the chemical responsible for hot flavor. Capsaicin is more concentrated in the seed and internal walls so removing these parts will reduce the potency of the pepper. The Scoville Heat Unit (SHU) measures pepper pungency. Pimento peppers are the most mild with 0 SHUs. Common bell peppers range from 100-600 SHUs. Jalapeno peppers range from 2,500-5,000 SHUs. Habanero peppers are the hottest with 300,000 SHUs. Pure capsaicin is 16,000,000 SHUs. The size and shape of peppers varies tremendously. The wide assortment of peppers and flavors makes peppers a fun crop eat and produce.

Handling Your Peppers

Hand harvest peppers when they are firm, tasty and crisp. The plant will continue to set fruit after each flush of harvest so regular harvesting maximizes yield. Peppers grown for their red, purple, or yellow color must ripen on the plant. Hot peppers develop the strongest flavor if allowed to remain on the plant until ripe.

Peppers may be hydrocooled in a water bath. Dry them on a screen table before packing into waxed cardboard boxes. A clean damp cloth can be used to provide humidity. Store peppers at 45° to 50°F and 90-95% humidity for up to 2 weeks. Temperatures less than 45°F can cause chilling injury. Drying peppers can be strung up with a string through them and stored for up to 6 months at 60-70% humidity.



For more information contact your local Extension Office to obtain these references:
Growing tomatoes, peppers, and eggplants in Wisconsin. Publication A3687. Commercial Vegetable Production in Wisconsin. Publication A3422.