

Cleveland Seed Bank's

guide to growing

PEPPERS

Peppers were domesticated over 10,000 years ago in what is now called Central and South America. Indigenous trade routes and birds spread their seed throughout the region while histories of colonization spread peppers across the world. Although we mainly think of peppers as food crops, medicinal traditions arising from the anti-inflammatory properties of capsaicin found within hot peppers have been around for thousands of years.

Latin name: *Capsicum annuum*

Sun: Full

Life cycle: Annual

Direct sow or transplant: Transplant

Height: 2.5-3'+ depending on variety

Container Friendly: Yes.



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SOW



Direct sow/transplant: Peppers need lots of heat to germinate. In NE OH, it's best to start peppers indoors ~6 weeks before final frost, pot up frequently, and transplant once the 2nd set of true leaves emerge.

Common mistakes: Starting seeds too early can lead to less abundant plants. Heat mats & grow lights increase germination for plants in the nightshade family; if you don't have these, it's better to wait to start seeds when the weather and soil are warmer (55+ degrees). Avoid burying stems when potting up.

Days to germination: ~ 7-10 days, depending on temperature and weather.

When: Start seedlings indoors 6-8 weeks before final frost. In NE OH, final frost is around the 2nd week of April.

Seedling Depth: ~ 1/4 inch deep.

Spacing: Place pepper transplants every 4-6 inches, smaller varieties can be placed closer together.

Succession sowing: Peppers are usually not succession sown because of their long growing season.

Companion planting: Low-growing crops like radish, dill, cilantro, and baby greens can be planted between pepper plants.

GROW

Soil: Peppers like fertile soil with a pH of 6.3-6.6. They're considered "heavy-feeders" so make sure to feed with compost often.

Staking: Most peppers varieties will not get tall enough to require staking.



Containers: Plant pepper transplants in 10+ gallon containers. Low-growing crops can be planted around the outer edge. Feed with compost or fish emulsion often!

Pests: Look for aphids under the leaves.

Diseases: Avoid Bacterial Leaf Spot by growing peppers (and other nightshade family crops) in different locations in your garden each year.

HARVEST



All pepper varieties will change from green to red (or yellow, or orange, or purple!) as they mature.

Flavors become richer as seeds mature.

For sweet peppers: Although they can be enjoyed at any stage of maturity, most sweet peppers are picked after they change from green to their variety color & the seeds have matured - when the pepper is at its sweetest!

For hot peppers: The level of 'spiciness' depends on the amount of capsaicin, which is low in the immature stages but increases as the hot pepper matures. Pick young and green for a less 'hot' pepper. If you want to enjoy the pepper at its 'spiciest' or with the most capsaicin for medicinal purposes, wait until the color changes & the seeds mature.



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SAVE

Peppers are self-pollinating, however, they will cross-pollinate with nearby peppers. Isolate hot varieties especially!



1 Pepper seeds are ready for harvest once the pepper is ripe, the same time as when you would pick & eat it!



2 Collect peppers, cut in half and gently brush seeds onto a plate. Remove any plant debris with a screen if needed. Allow seeds to dry.



3 Seed can be stored for up to 4 years in a cool, dry place.



Preserving the harvest: Peppers don't require blanching before freezing, but tougher-skinned varieties might need roasting before being set in the freezer.

All peppers can be canned or dried. Dry hot peppers & ground them down to make spicy chili flakes or a fine powder for seasoning.

TYPES

Sweet peppers: These peppers come in all shapes, sizes, and colors. Although we typically picture bell peppers when thinking of sweet peppers, there are many more delicious varieties!

Hot peppers: 'Spicy' peppers are filled with various levels of medicinal capsaicin. Factors like variety type and their stage of maturity affect how much capsaicin they contain.



Anaheim



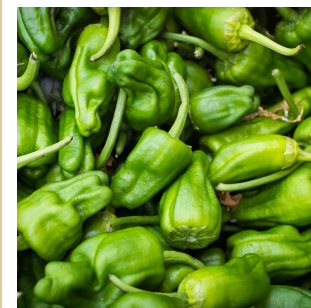
Poblano



Cayenne



Sweet Mini



Padron



Thai Pepper