



## Growing Peppers at Home

### Soil:

- Peppers grow best in fertile, well-drained soils with high levels of organic matter.
- Peppers thrive in a soil pH ranging from 6.0 to 7.5.
- Before you transplant, a soil test is recommended to ensure you have the right nutrients to keep your peppers happy.
  - Fertilizer should be applied per the results of the soil test.
- Transplant outdoors after the last frost date and once outdoor soil temperatures reach 65°F to 70°F.

### Planting:

- Peppers can be grown from seeds or purchased as transplants for the garden.
- Peppers are heat loving and our summer season is short, so it is recommended to start them indoors 6 to 8 weeks prior to transplanting outdoors.
- Allow 18 to 24 inches between plants; 12 to 24 inches between rows. However, they can take a bit of crowding.

### Seeds:

- Seeds should be planted  $\frac{1}{4}$  to  $\frac{1}{2}$  inch deep into warm soil; 65 degrees **F** is best.
  - Use a heat mat if available to help germinate the seeds.
- Watering of the seedlings should be done carefully.
  - There is a delicate balance between too much and too little.
  - Soil should be moist and pliable, not dry and crumbly, nor wet and dripping.
- Apply a small amount of soluble or liquid fertilizer once the seedlings have their first set of true leaves.
  - The directions for mixing a starter solution appear on all soluble fertilizer products.

### Starts:

- Optionally, buy starts and plant them outdoors after the last frost date and once outdoor soil temperatures reach 65°F to 70°.
  - Before planting outdoors, the plants should be hardened off for about 10 days.
  - Set them outdoors, in their pots, in the shade, and bring back indoors at night.
- Peppers can be grown in containers.
  - A pepper in a 5-gallon bucket would be very happy. Even a 1-gallon pot can support a pepper.

### Growing:

- Peppers require at least 6 hours of direct sunlight each day.
- It takes 60 to 90 days, or up to 150 days for the hotter peppers until harvest. Keep in mind, peppers can be harvested green, so this period can be shorter.

### Integrated Pest Management:

Peppers are generally easy to grow, and a lot of growing problems can be avoided if you follow a few simple rules:

- Keep the area clear of weeds and decomposing plant matter.
- Space plants to allow good air circulation.
- Maintain proper watering and do not allowing water to get on the leaves.
- Rotate crops each year. Planting a crop in the same place year after year allows disease and pests harboring in the soil to reestablish.

- Commons Pests, diseases, and problems: (See Hortsense under Resources for additional information):
  - Aphids: Leaves curl downward enclosing colonies of aphids. Leaves yellow, wilt, and may drop from the plant.
  - Spider mites: Whitish-yellow stippling appears along the leaf midrib. Whole leaves yellow, bronze, and then die.
  - Flea beetles: They chew characteristic, small, irregular “shotholes” or scalloped scoops in the lower leaves closest to the ground surface.
  - Whiteflies: They feed on plant sap on the underside of infested pepper leaves. At high infestation rates, damaged leaves may wilt, turn yellow, and drop prematurely from the plant.
  - Blossom end rot: A water-soaked, light-brown spot on the distal or blossom end of the fruit. This is usually a sign of inconsistent watering.
  - Verticillium wilt: Leaves wilt and collapse. Rotate your crops! Some pepper varieties are more resistant than others.
  - Sunburn: Appears as light, discolored areas on the surfaces of the pepper that are most exposed to the direct rays of the sun. Provide good water irrigation and cover with a shade cloth.



*Peppers growing indoors under lamps.*



*Shishito peppers growing in the garden.*

### **Resources**

*Vegetables: Growing Peppers in Home Gardens*, WSU Publication:

<https://pubs.extension.wsu.edu/vegetables-growing-peppers-in-home-gardens-home-garden-series>

*Home Vegetable Gardening in Washington*, WSU Publication:

<https://s3.wp.wsu.edu/uploads/sites/2071/2014/04/Home-Vegetable-Gardening-in-WA-EM>

WSU Hortsense Fact Sheets for pest and disease issues:

<http://hortsense.cahnr.wsu.edu/Search/SearchByPlantCategory.aspx>

WSU Soil temperature guide. <https://weather.wsu.edu/?p=89750>

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