

# Peppers

## (Sweet and Hot)



**Sun:** Plant in full sun (6 to 8 hours). Space 24 inches apart within rows or 1 plant per 5- to 7-gallon container. Plant from April through May after any danger of frost has passed and in July.

**Soil:** Amend with organic matter to create a well-drained soil. Avoid planting in unamended sandy or heavy clay soils. If the soil test shows pH is below 6.2, apply lime in January or February as recommended. If the pH is above 6.2, apply a pH-neutral calcium supplement, such as gypsum. Add  $\frac{1}{4}$  cup gypsum per plant to prevent blossom-end rot.

If growing in a container garden, amend each pot with  $\frac{1}{4}$  cup gypsum. For proper drainage, use potting mix and ensure containers have drainage holes. Alternatively, consider using self-watering containers.

**Water:** Keep soil consistently moist but not saturated. Apply 1 to 2 inches of water each week and more during hot summer days. Avoid wetting leaves to prevent fungal disease. Mulch helps retain moisture.

**Plant:** Start seedlings 6 to 8 weeks before planting time and slowly harden off 1 week before moving to the garden. If buying transplants, choose those with healthy color and a stocky appearance. Avoid plants with flowers or fruit. Dig the planting hole as deep as the root ball or slightly deeper. Firmly pat down the soil and water deeply.

**Fertilize:** In the absence of a soil test, apply all-purpose fertilizer (8-8-8 or 10-10-10) at planting, according to label directions. Reapply beside plants, 4 to 6 inches from the stem (side-dress), after the first fruit sets.

**Insects/Diseases/Weeds:** Scout plants frequently for insect/disease damage. Use insecticidal soap (for soft-bodied insects) or Bt dust or spray (for caterpillars, or worms). Spray fungicide regularly to suppress common fungal diseases. Always follow label instructions. Mulch inhibits weeds and diseases.

**Harvest:** Harvest at 65 to 85 days, when firm and fully colored. Harvest time varies depending on the variety.

**Other:** Plant peppers in a cage for added support.

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