

Join in the celebrations and grow your own chillies and peppers

This year the humble sweet pepper and its close relative the hot chilli pepper are in focus across the gardening industry. It's the Year of the Pepper and these fascinating 'fruits' are under the spotlight.

Anyone can grow chillies and peppers, they are some of the easiest plants to grow, they are packed with flavour and are attractive plants in their own right too.

POPULAR PLANTS

Houseplants are on trend. So why not choose to grow a plant that not only makes a great houseplant, but will provide fresh, tasty ingredients for the kitchen too. Chilli plants are often grown for their ornamental value, as the coloured chilli peppers and attractive foliage make very good-looking plants. Fruits start out green and ripen to rich yellow, fiery orange, deep red and even purple. You can choose between the sweet bell peppers, which are usually bigger plants, but have mild, juicy, tasty fruits packed with vitamins.

Or if you want to spice life up a bit, then choose a chilli plant according to your taste buds. Chillies aren't all hot, and they have a wide range of flavours to add to your menus.

But if you hanker for some heat then look out for those up high on the Scoville scale, it's a measure of the heat of the peppers. The sweet, bell peppers register zero on the scale, but some of the Naga chillies have a heat unit over a million and are not for the faint hearted. Chillies have a bit of a following and there are even chilli clubs and chilli fiestas where

you can share seeds, plants and knowledge and learn a bit more.

SWEET AND TASTY

Sweet peppers, sometimes called bell peppers are just as easy to grow and great for cooking up your favourite recipes in the kitchen. Packed full of vitamins and flavour you can roast, stir-fry or stuff them with other tasty ingredients. Grow them against a sunny wall in a grow bag for the best results. Keep them well watered and feed with a high potash plant fertiliser for lots of delicious fruits.

GROWING PEPPERS

Peppers are ideal for patio growing and perfect for containers so you can grow them in pots on a terrace, balcony or even a windowsill.

- You can sow and grow peppers really easily from seed, or visit the garden centre or nursery in spring for ready grown plants for your garden.
- If you get hooked on chillies and want to grow something a bit different from the usual plants at the garden centre, then search for a specialist seed supplier with a good choice of chilli varieties.
- Most of the peppers that we grow in the garden are not frost hardy, which means if you sow and grow the seeds before the last frost (usually late May or early June in most UK areas) you will need to keep your seeds, seedlings and resulting plants frost free until it is safe to plant them out.



Step by Step

1. For the best results sow your seeds into individual, deep modules or sow several into a 1-litre pot.
2. Fill your pots or modules with a quality seed sowing compost.
3. Make holes in the compost that are 3-5mm deep using a dibber or a pencil. One hole per module or five holes for each 1-litre pot is about right.
4. Drop one pepper seed into each hole and cover the seeds with a little more compost and water gently with slightly tepid water.
5. Keep the compost moist but not sodden. Depending on the temperature the seeds will germinate and send up seed leaves in 1-3 weeks.
6. When your plants are large enough to handle they can be planted out into the garden or into the final pots and containers. Remember chillies and peppers must not be planted outside until all risk of frost has passed.



YEAR OF THE
pepper



MANY VARIETIES



HEALTHY VEGETABLES

Easy 2 grow

Peppers of all types are easy to grow and germinate fairly quickly from seed. Remember that all plants and seedlings will need to be kept frost-free until all danger of frost has passed. Sow seed in April or May for the best results.

