

Pepper, sweet

Capsicum annuum

Sweet peppers live up to their name when they are allowed to ripen on the plant. When pepper color changes from green to red, orange, yellow, brown, or even purple, the taste becomes sweeter and, another bonus, the Vitamin A and C content increases dramatically.

TIP – With peppers, there is nothing to be gained by rushing to plant. If the soil temperature is less than 65°F plants will grow slowly, if at all. Wait until nighttime lows stay consistently above 50°F.

Location and soil Grow peppers in full sun. Soil should be well drained and high in organic matter. Raised beds are ideal, as they warm up faster than surrounding soil.

When to Plant Sow seed indoors about 2 months prior to the planting date in your area, providing bottom heat to speed germination. Transplant seedlings to larger pots as necessary to keep them healthy. Wait to set transplants out until the soil has warmed to at least 65°F. In warm winter areas, a second round can be planted in mid-summer for a fall harvest.

Germination Sweet peppers will sprout in 10 days to 2 weeks, depending on soil temperature. Seeds will germinate poorly or not at all in cold soil. Best germination occurs when soil temperature is between 70° and 85°F.



Plant Spacing Spacing will vary by pepper variety but in general allow 15 inches to 2 feet of space between plants, and about 3 feet between rows.

Garden Care Provide steady moisture to peppers as they grow. Support plants with stakes or cages as they become laden with fruit to prevent branches from breaking off or whole plants from sprawling. Temperatures higher than 90°F can cause blossom drop, so try to provide shelter from afternoon shade during periods of extreme heat. Though not as susceptible to diseases as tomatoes (a close relative) it's a good idea to rotate the location of your pepper bed from year to year to prevent problems.

Fertilize Fertilize with an all-purpose vegetable food at the time of planting, and side-dress with compost or fertilizer when the first flowers appear.

Harvest Peppers can be used at the immature green stage or fully ripe, so pick them as you need them. Use pruners or garden shears to harvest fruits to avoid damaging the plant.

Nutrition A serving of green pepper provides an ample supply of Vitamins A and C, and B6. Allow the pepper to ripen to red, and the Vitamin C content increases by 50%, the Vitamin A by 750%!

	Sweet Banana	California Wonder
	 © Nova-Photo-Graphik	 © Nova-Photo-Graphik
Plant Description	Plants grow to about 2 feet and produce large numbers of peppers.	Sturdy plants grow 24-30 inches tall. A classic—introduced in 1928.
Fruit Description	4-6 inch, tapered fruits are shaped like jalapeños. They start out yellow-green, changing to orange and then red, and can be picked at any stage.	Fruits are thick-walled and blocky, about 4-4½ inches long and wide, and mature from green to red.
Culture	Easier to grow and more productive than thicker-walled peppers.	Provide support as plants become laden with fruit.
Days: Transplant to harvest	60-75	75-80