

MOLES SEEDS

Cucumber

Cultural Leaflet: ZZ560

Greenhouse ('frame')

This cucumber is straight, cylindrical, smooth-skinned, and may reach 45cm in length. Smaller-sized cucumbers are also popular.

Outdoor ('ridge')

This cucumber is generally smaller, and may be covered in bumps or small spines.

Greenhouse hybrid cucumbers are parthenocarpic, that is they produce fruit without fertilisation of the flowers - these are referred to as all-female types. Non-hybrid types produce male and female flowers. The male flowers (with a short, thin stalk behind the petals) should be retained.

Non-hybrid outdoor cucumbers produce male and female flowers - keep both as fertilization is essential for fruit development.

Do not grow non-hybrid ordinary varieties in the same greenhouse as the all-female F1 hybrids, as cross-pollination will occur.

Programming the Crop

For an early crop, sow the large (30 per gram) seeds half an inch deep into paper tubes or peat pots, from December onwards. Germinate at 21-27°C. Growth cabinets can be used to hasten growth. Alternatively seed can be 'chitted' prior to sowing.

Pot up 7-10 days after sowing in 11-13cm pots. Handle very carefully to avoid root damage. Plant from late December to late February, once the plants are 30-38cm high with 8-10 leaves, in prepared beds 45-60cm apart.

Crop from February/March until September. Pick carefully by cutting through the supporting stalk. Harvest every 4-5 days, and keep the picked fruit cool. Minimum temperature should be 19°C for optimum production.

For a mid-season crop, sow January. Pot on after 7-8 days. Plant up March. Crop April onwards.

For a late crop, Sow February to March (April for outdoor production). Pot 2-5 days later. Plant up April (early June for outdoor production). Crop May to October (late July to first frosts/end of September for the outdoor crop). Cucumbers planted in late April can be grown in cold or partially-heated glasshouses.

For retail plant sales, sow seed February- April direct into 8cm pots and sell when the first true leaves are visible. The most common problem when raising plants for retail sales, is insufficient heat - minimum temperature should be 19°C.

Growing methods

There is a number of methods to grow cucumbers. The chosen medium must be well aerated, and moisture-retentive, yet have good drainage (possibly by raising the bed above the surrounding ground level).

In addition to direct planting into border soil, cucumbers can be successfully produced in:

- Growbags
- Large Pots
- Ring Culture
- Rockwool (in this case plants should be grown from the outset in the chosen medium)
- Perlite.

Whichever method is chosen, watering and feeding should be carried out on a 'little and often' basis according to the requirement of the crop. Keep the greenhouse temperature at 21°C day and 19°C night, ventilating at 27°C, for the first two months of cropping. These are ideal temperatures. Avoid cold draughts as cucumbers are susceptible.

Training

There are three basic methods of training; vertical cordons, oblique cordons and arch training. As for tomatoes, twist the stems round a vertical polypropylene twine attached around the base (neck) of the plant and to an overhead wire. Remove all sideshoots and flowers from the bottom 20cm of the plant. As new side-shoots appear, stop at two leaves after the flower. Allow longer side shoots higher up the plant.

Pest and Disease

Aphid	Two spotted Spider Mite
Sciarid Fly	Whitefly
Eelworm	Slugs and snails
Grey Mould (botrytis)	Black stem rot
Powdery mildew	Verticillium wilt
Cucumber mosaic virus	Black rock rot
Gummosis (grow resistant varieties)	Anthraxnose (leaf spot) (grow resistant varieties)

Use sticky traps to help monitor for signs of pest build up. Use biological methods where feasible. For advice on chemical control, consult your agrochemical supplier.

Information provided for guidance only, as cultural practices and climatic circumstances vary.

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