

MOLES SEEDS

Peppers (Capsicum)

Cultural Leaflet: ZZ610

Modern varieties of pepper have been selected for fruit size and shape, habit of growth, seasonality and resistance to certain diseases, especially virus.

They have very similar needs to tomatoes, although light levels are not so critical, owing to the lower temperatures at which peppers should be grown to induce fruit setting.

For best results in the UK, it is advised to grow the crop indoors with heat. This means that crops can be grown all year round with the correct temperatures.

Hot and sweet peppers are important components of retail plant sales programmes. There are specific varieties for this purpose - these include Apache (chilli variety for pots) and Redskin (sweet variety for pots). Full details are in the catalogue and on the website.

Programming the Crop

Very early heated crop:	Sow November, plant December
Early heated crop:	Sow January, plant February
Heated crop:	Sow March, plant April
Cold Crop:	Sow April/early May, plant late April/ mid May
Late crop (poss. heated):	Sow mid June/early July, plant end June/ mid July
Retail Plant Sales:	Sow January to March, for plant sales in 8/9cm pots in April / May

Propagation and Growing-on

Sow the seed into compost either into a seed tray or into modules with a temperature between 20-30°C and cover with a light layer of compost. Germination typically takes 14-21 days.

Cover the compost with clear plastic film which helps raise the temperature aiding germination.

Compost should be of pH 5.8-6.3 with medium levels of N, P, K, and Mg. High salts must be avoided.

Give plants good light and space out as required, holding temperatures at not less than 22-24°C if possible. Lower temperatures will suffice, but planting can be delayed. Time of propagation can vary from 4-6 weeks under best conditions, to 8 weeks or more. Note later comments about fruit setting at lower temperatures.

For commercial cropping, it is best to re-pot in stages before their final pot size. Once in final pot size plants may need staking for support. Water regularly but be careful not to over water, surface of compost can be allowed to dry out slightly between watering.

Planting and Spacing

This can be at 45cm square where four shoots are left with no pruning (supporting the crop as necessary with horizontal strings), down to 40cm where 2 shoots are taken and plants trimmed by lateral stopping to 1-3 leaves.

Plants are set out when roots are crowding and ideally when they are in flower. Root zone temperatures should be high (22-24°C) for maximum growth. For rockwool culture, root zone warming can be used beneath the slabs. In fact peppers prefer higher root zone temperatures and lower air temperatures. Growing substrate should be adjusted to a pH of 5.8-6.3 with N, P, K, and Mg indices around 3-4 with medium salt content. Although responding to good aerial day temperatures, fruit set is better at lower temperatures. General recommendations are 15-17°C night, 18-20°C day, ventilating at 23°C in sunny weather. In dull weather, temperatures should be slightly lowered.

Harvesting

Hot peppers can be harvested from green or once ripened into yellow, orange or red. A hot pepper's heat usually intensifies with maturity. Once ripe fruits can remain on plant in good condition until temperatures begin to drop.

Pest and Disease

Basically similar to tomatoes. Fruit blotch due to high salt is possible, and whitefly can become a problem. Monitor the crop using sticky traps, and treat accordingly. Use biological control where feasible.

Peppers are attacked by several pest and diseases such as:

- Red Spider Mite
- Whitefly
- Botrytis
- Blossom End Rot
- Aphid

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

(12/15)

