



Harvest of the Month

PEPPERS



All About Peppers!

Bold colors and bold flavors sure to brighten up any garden!

Pepper's rich history matches its rich flavor. From sweet to spicy, peppers are a highly valued crop all over the world.



Pepper Botany

Peppers come in two main types: "sweet" and "hot." This distinction comes about from the chemical compound called capsaicin, which is responsible for the heat in hot peppers. Originally, all peppers were hot. It wasn't until humans began to cultivate peppers that they began to develop peppers without capsaicin, ultimately creating the sweet peppers we know today.

Social Science

Originally, peppers grew wild in the area that is now Eastern Mexico. They began to be cultivated by the native people of that area over 5,000 years ago and became an important crop all over Central and South America. The word chili comes from the Nahuatl word "xili." Historians believe that early European explorers to that area called the plant "pepper" because the taste reminded them of the peppercorn (*Piper nigrum*) native to India that had become a popular spice in Europe. Those European explorers took *Capsicum* peppers back with them to Europe and then peppers found their way east to Asia. They were quickly adopted into the cuisines of China, India, Thailand and other eastern cultures.

Pimienta means pepper in Spanish.

Nutrition

Peppers are high in Vitamin C, Vitamin B6, Vitamin A (Beta carotene) and antioxidants such as lutein and capsaicin.

Growing Tips



Planting Preparation:

Plant in warm weather (soil temp above 70 degrees.). These slow-growing plants are best transplanted outdoors when the weather is consistently warm and settled in late spring.

Proper Spacing and Care:

Pepper plants like to grow in nutrient-dense soil. Give each pepper plant one square foot of space. Your plants will also benefit from being tied up.

At planting time, drive a sturdy stake into the ground next to your plant and tie it to the stake as it grows. Alternatively, use a tomato cage to keep your pepper plant growing upright.



Harvesting Tips:

In Sonoma County, peppers thrive and reach their peak in September, after the start of autumn. While all peppers start green, sweet varieties become tastier and more nutritious in various colors. Some hot peppers, like jalapenos or poblanos, are used green, while others, such as cayenne and fresno, are preferred when fully ripe.



Pepper Art Project

Use dried peppers to create decorative wreaths to celebrate the beauty of pepper season. First, gather an assortment of dried peppers in various colors and sizes. Next, take a circular wreath form and use twine or wire to securely attach the dried peppers around the circumference. Once all the peppers are in place, hang your beautiful dried pepper wreath on your door or wall to add a spicy and rustic touch to your decor.



Cooking with Peppers



Peppers can be prepared in a multitude of ways, each yielding distinct flavors and textures. Fresh peppers are perfect for salads and stir-fries, adding a crisp and vibrant crunch. Drying and dehydrating peppers intensifies their flavor and makes them suitable for long-term storage or grinding into flavorful powders. Blanching softens the peppers for stuffing or freezing, while baking them can create a smoky sweetness, perfect for roasted pepper dishes. Blending peppers into sauces or salsas unlocks their full potential, infusing a burst of color and taste into your culinary creations.

[For pepper recipes visit SGN's Cooking From The Garden page](#)