



Peppers

Crow Wing County Master Gardeners *Giving Gardens* Guide to Peppers

Author: JoAnn Weaver, U of M Extension Crow Wing County Master Gardener

DESCRIPTION

Green peppers are technically a fruit, but most commonly thought of as a vegetable. Peppers are low in calories and contain significant amounts of Vitamins A and C. Peppers are native to Mexico and Central America.

PLANT SITE REQUIREMENTS

Sun	Six to eight hours of sun daily
Soil	Light, warm, fertile, well-drained. Peppers do best in soil with pH between 6.5 and 7
Soil Temp	Do not transplant seedlings until the days are at least 60°F and nights remain at least above 55°F as they are very sensitive to cold injury
Placement	Member of the nightshade family and should not be planted in an area where other nightshade plants such as potatoes, eggplant, and peppers were planted in the previous three to four years as they draw the same nutrients from the soil and attract many of the same pests.

PLANT SELECTION

Hot Pepper Classification

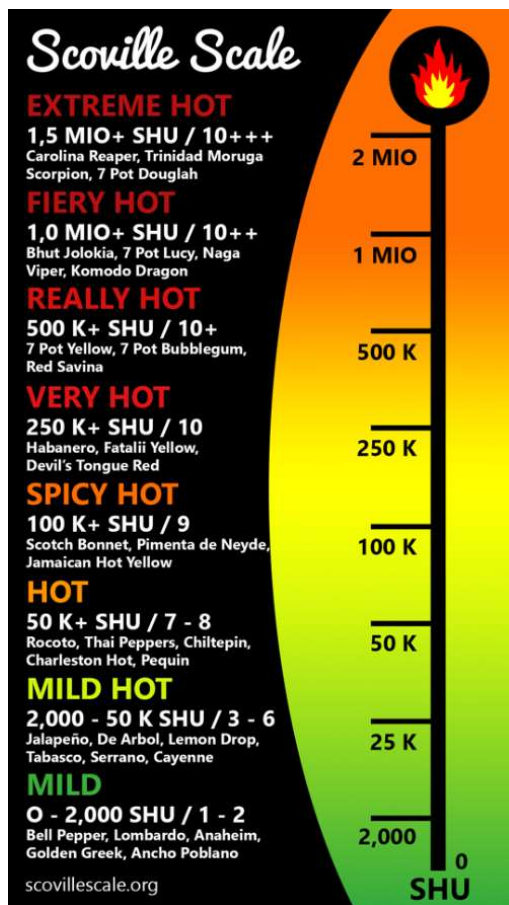
- Hot pepper classification based on relative hotness – the Scoville Heat Unit (SHU) is a measure of pepper pungency. <https://www.scovillescale.org/chili-pepper-scoville-scale/>
- Capsaicin is the chemical that causes a burning sensation. It is more concentrated in the seeds and the internal walls of chili peppers.
- Sweet peppers do not produce large amounts of capsaicin.

Days to Maturity – Days are calculated once the pepper plant is planted in the garden. Most varieties mature in 60 to 90 days, but hot peppers may take up to 150 days.

Disease Resistance - varies among varieties and should be researched and considered when selecting the type of pepper to grow.

PLANTING RECOMMENDATIONS

- Start pepper seed indoors 8 to 12 weeks before the last frost free date. Some peppers are slow to germinate so be patient. If buying transplants look for young, bright green plants with shiny, perky foliage.



- Require relatively little space to grow but need hot, dry conditions to fully develop flavor.
- Do not bury plants deeper than the transplant soil line.
- Space plants 18 to 24 inches apart in the garden.
- Protect from cutworms
- Mulch with two to three inches of organic matter such as compost.
- Pinch flower buds at planting and continue to do this for a week or so as it will help to build up the leaves and the roots.

MAINTENANCE

Watering - Wilted plants often die due to irreversible cell damage so keep the plant watered appropriately – one to two inches of water per week on average.

Pollination - Pepper flowers contain both the male and the female parts so each flower should self-pollinate. If pollination a concern, consider a cotton swab or a small paintbrush to manually transfer the pollen. Temperatures greater than 90°F or less than 55°F will result in heavy blossom drop.

Weeding - weeds can be a source of insects and disease as well as competing for nutrients in the soil, so keep the area as weed free as possible

Questions or Problems - go to <http://www.extension.umn.edu/yard-and-garden> and search for “Diseases of Pepper” – “What Insect is this?” – “What’s wrong with my Plant?” – “Is this Plant a Weed?”

RECIPE

Green Bell Peppers Stuffed with Hamburger and Cheese

Ingredients

6 large green bell peppers	1 pound ground beef
½ cup of chopped onion	1 (16 oz.) can diced tomatoes
1 teaspoon salt	1 teaspoon Worcestershire sauce
Dash of Pepper	½ cup long-grain rice
1 cup water	1 cup shredded Cheddar cheese

Instructions

1. Cut off tops of green peppers and discard seeds and membranes. Chop up enough of the tops to make ¼ cup, set aside.
2. Cook whole green peppers, uncovered in boiling water for about 5 minutes, remove from water, invert, and drain well.
3. Sprinkle inside of the peppers lightly with salt.
4. In a skillet cook ground beef, ¼ cup chopped green pepper and onion until meat is browned and vegetables are tender.
5. Drain off excess fat; add drained tomatoes, salt, Worcestershire sauce and pepper.
6. In a separate pot, bring 1 cup of water to a boil and add rice. Cook until rice is soft, add more water if needed.
7. Add rice to beef mixture and stir in cheese. Stuff peppers with meat mixture.
8. Place in a 10 x 6 x 2 baking dish. Place baking foil over the top. Bake, covered, in a 350° oven for 30 minutes.
9. During the last five minutes, remove foil; add extra cheese to the top of each pepper if desired.