



# Cucumbers

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Cucumbers (*Cucumis sativus*) are common garden vegetables in all regions of Minnesota. You can eat them pickled, or raw in salads. Like other vine crops such as squash, melons and pumpkins, cucumbers grow best in warm weather. Some varieties form long vines that may need a trellis. Others are bush-types that fit better in a small garden.



## Plant Requirements

Sun	Full Sun - six plus hours of sun daily
Soil	Medium-textured, well-drained, weed free soil with a pH 6.0-6.5 which is slightly acidic
Soil Temp	At least 60 degrees F
Placement	Keep your crop off the ground. Train cucumbers up a vertical or A-frame trellis. Cucumbers are climbers; let them climb. Fruit hanging off a trellis will grow straight and be easy to pick. Start training cucumbers up when they begin to flower.

## Plant Selection

Type	Characteristics	Usage
Slicing	About 7"-8" long, straight, dark green skin	Eat raw or in salads
Pickling	Short and stout, about 3" - 5" long with a drier interior and bumps or spines	Sweet or dill pickles
Seedless/Burpless	Thin skinned, few seeds, supposedly less bitter and easier to digest	Eat raw or in salads

## Planting Recommendations

- Plant seeds directly in the garden once soil has warmed up, usually the end of May/beginning of June.
- Sow seeds about one-half inch deep. For vining types that will spread out in the garden, sow seeds two inches apart. Allow about two or three feet of space on either side of the row for the vines to spread.
- A "hill" of three or four seeds sown close together is another way to plant cucumbers in the garden. Allow five to six feet between hills. You can plant bush types, with very short vines, in closely spaced rows or hills, with only two to three feet between rows or hills.
- After emergence, thin seedlings to stand 8 to 12 inches apart. You may also train the vines to climb a three- to four-foot trellis, allowing you to space garden rows more closely, and producing perfectly straight fruit.

## Maintenance

Watering - Cucumbers need about one inch of water from rainfall or irrigation each week during the growing season.

Pollination - Cucumber plants have separate male and female flowers on the same plant. Male flowers usually appear first, each attached to the plant by a slender pedicel, or stem. Female flowers grow close to the main vine. Between the flower and the vine is a small round ovary, the unfertilized fruit.

An insect must move the pollen from the male flowers to the female flowers. Bees are common cucumber pollinators. Some newer varieties of cucumber will set fruit that develops normally, even if there is no pollination of the female flowers. These fruits will be seedless or nearly so.

## Problems & Pests

- Poor pollination due to cold, wet weather or low bee activity may result in poorly shaped or few fruits.
- Cucumbers are susceptible to several pests and powdery mildew.
- For more specific information, go to <https://extension.umn.edu/plant-diseases/insects-and-diseases-cucumber-pumpkin-and-squash>

## Harvesting and Storage

Harvesting - Pickling varieties should be harvested when the fruits are 2 to 4 inches long.

Slicing cucumbers should be harvested when 6 to 8 inches long and 1 ½ to 2 inches in diameter, but still dark green and firm. Overly mature cucumbers can be bitter or seedy and prevent more fruit from forming.

Storage - Refrigerate after picking and use within a week.

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### Lazy Woman Pickles

#### Ingredients

1 cup sugar	1 cup vinegar
1 tsp. celery seed	1 tsp salt
1 tsp mustard seed	¼ tsp turmeric

#### Instructions

1. Bring ingredients to a boil.
2. Pour over sliced cucumbers and a few onion pieces in jars. Keep in the refrigerator.