

24. Sweet Peppers

Sweet peppers such as bell peppers for example are a great warm-season crop to consider for your garden. They grow well in warmer climates but can also be grown in zones 5-6 if cared for correctly. Their sweet and delicious taste and healthy vitamin content means that they are a favourite annual fruit for home growing.

Why Grow Sweet Peppers in Your Garden?

One of the great things about this warm season crop is that there are so many different and interesting varieties to consider. Sweet peppers come in a huge range of sizes, colours and hues.

When To Sow Sweet Peppers

Zones 5-6: Start indoors early in the year, before planting out with summer crops once the weather has warmed. Hold off until the soil has warmed and spring is well under way.

Zones 7-8: Direct sow sweet peppers with other warm season crops in around April.

Zones 9-10: Direct sow sweet peppers in March or early April.

Growing Sweet Peppers

Always remember that these are warm season plants. They need the sun and heat in order to come to fruition. You will also need to ensure that the soil/growing medium itself is nice and warm, as well as moist. Water your plants regularly, especially if growing indoors, or outside in dry conditions.

Once two leaves have formed you should pot up seedlings grown indoors. At this point you can continue to grow your peppers in containers indoors, or you can plant them in garden growing areas. (Remember to harden off indoors grown plants when moving them outdoors.)

Like other fruiting plants, sweet peppers will need plenty of potassium to grow and fruit well. It is a good idea to feed your plants during their flowering and fruiting period with potash rich liquid fertilizers. One great organic option is a comfrey feed (which, if you grow comfrey elsewhere in your garden, you can make yourself at home). You can also mulch with comfrey leaves, or other high potassium organic materials.

In our 12x4 ft bed plans for full sun, we have suggested growing sweet peppers in the same area as tomatoes (for crop rotation purposes, as they are in the same plant family) but not directly alongside them (because they share certain diseases). The companion plants in this area of the bed (borage and basil) will aid the peppers too. The tomato plant family is one of the main families to think about when it comes to crop rotation. These plants should ideally not be grown in the same area over multiple years.

Harvesting Sweet Peppers

As soon as your peppers or chillies have reached their mature size and have changed into the correct colour, they are ready to harvest. (Usually from around August/September.) You can use them fresh, or preserve them for later use. Sweet peppers (like plenty of other produce) can be dried or canned to preserve the harvest for use over the coming months.