



Cucumber plants grow in two forms: vining and bush. Vines scramble along the ground or clamber up trellises, while bush types, such as Burpless Bush Hybrid, form a more compact plant. Generally, vining cucumbers yield more fruit throughout the growing season. Bush varieties are especially suited to containers and small gardens.

How to Grow Cucumbers

Planting

1. Cucumber plants are seeded or transplanted outside in the ground no earlier than 2 weeks after last frost date. Cucumbers are extremely susceptible to frost damage; the soil must be at least 70F (21C) for germination. Do not plant outside too soon!
2. Before you plant outside, select a site with full sun.
3. Soil should be neutral or slightly alkaline with a pH of 7.0.
4. Cucumbers require fertile soil. Mix in compost and/or aged manure before planting to a depth of 2 inches and work into the soil 6 to 8 inches deep. Make sure that soil is moist and well-drained, not soggy.
5. Improve clay soil by adding organic matter. Improve dense, heavy soil by adding peat, compost or rotted manure. Light, sandy soils are preferred for northern gardens, as they warm quickly in the spring.
6. Plant seedlings one inch deep and about 36 to 60 inches apart, depending on variety. For vines trained on a trellis, space plants 1 foot apart.
7. For an early crop, start cucumber seeds indoors about 3 weeks before you transplant them in the ground. They like bottom heat of about 70F (21C). If you don't have a heat mat, put the seeds flat on top of the refrigerator
8. If you live in the cooler climates, you can help warm the soil by covering the hill or row with black plastic.
9. Once the ground is warm, mulch with pine straw, chopped leaves, or another organic mulch to keep pests at bay, and also keep bush types off the ground to avoid disease.
10. A trellis is a good idea if you want the vine to climb, or if you have limited space. Trellising also protects the fruit from damage from lying on the moist ground.

Care

The main plant care requirement for cucumbers is water—consistent watering! They need one inch of water per week (more if temperatures are sky high). Put your finger in the soil and when it is dry past the first joint of your finger, it is time to water. Inconsistent watering leads to bitter-tasting fruit.

Water in the morning or early afternoon, avoiding the leaves so that you don't get leaf diseases which will ruin the plant.

If you have limited space or would prefer vertical vines, set up trellises early to avoid damage to seedlings and vines.



Pests/Diseases

If your cucumber plants do not set fruit, it's not usually a disease. There is probably a pollination issue. The first flowers were all male. Both female and male flowers must be blooming at the same time. This may not happen early in the plant's life, so be patient. (Female flowers are the ones with a small cucumber-shaped swelling at the base that will become the fruit.)

Lack of fruit may also be due to poor pollination by bees, especially due to rain or cold temperatures, or insecticides. To rest assured, you could always hand pollinate. (Dip a Q-tip into the male pollen and transfer it to the center of the female flower.)

Squash bugs may attack seedlings.

Aphids are always a nuisance for any vegetable plant but easily managed.

Powdery mildew can be a problem if the leaves get wet (water at the soil level). Apply fungicides at the first sign of its presence.

Cucumber Beetles may attack the vines and can cause disease.

Harvest

1. Don't let cucumbers get too large or they will taste bitter.
2. At peak harvesting time, you should be picking cucumbers every couple of days.
3. Harvest regular slicing cucumbers when they about 6 to 8 inches long (slicing varieties).
4. Harvest dills at 4 to 6 inches long and pickles at 2 inches long for pickles.
5. The large burpless cucumbers can be up to 10 inches long and some types are even larger.
6. Cucumbers are best picked before their seeds become hard and are eaten when immature. Do not let them get yellow. A cucumber is of highest quality when it is uniformly green, firm, and crisp.
7. Any cucumbers left on the vine too long will also get tough skins and lower plant productivity.
8. Using a knife or clippers, cut the stem above the fruit. Pulling the fruit may damage the vine.

Companion Planting

Plant beside asparagus, beans, Brassicas, celery, corn, dill, kohlrabi, lettuce, onion, peas, radish, and tomatoes. **Avoid** planting near potatoes and sage.

Both corn and sunflowers can act as a trellis for cucumbers

