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How to Grow Cucumber Plants: The Complete Guide

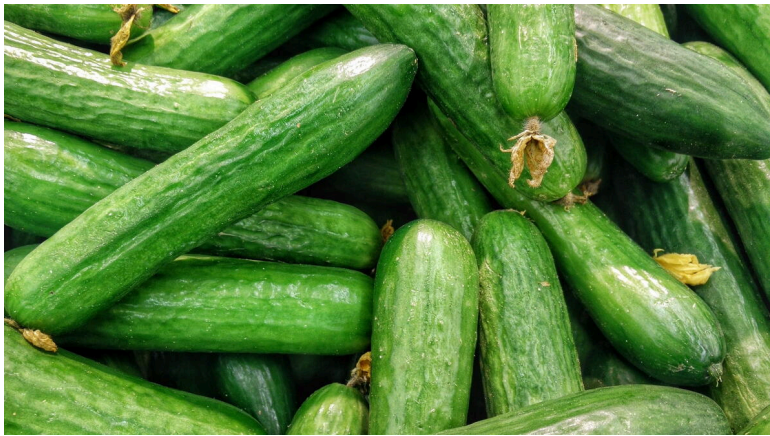


Photo Credit: Pixabay

Botanical Name:
Cucumis sativus

Plant Type:
Vegetable

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Planting, Growing, and Harvesting Cucumbers

By [Catherine Boeckmann](#)
Last Updated: April 24, 2025



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What would a summer salad be without the cool crunch of cucumber slices? It's no surprise that cucumbers are one of the most popular garden vegetables! Learn how to plant, grow, and harvest cucumbers in your garden.

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About Cucumber Plants

There are two types of cucumber plants: **vining cucumbers** and **bush cucumbers**.

- **Vining cucumbers**, the most common varieties, grow on vigorous vines shaded by large leaves. The growth of these plants is fast, and the crop yield is abundant if you care for them properly. Vining varieties grow best when trained up a trellis or fence. Since they

rectly atop soil—often more abundant and easier to pick.

- **Bush cucumbers**, however, are nicely suited to [containers and small gardens](#).

There are different cucumber varieties for growing outdoors and for growing in a greenhouse. Outdoor cucumbers can tolerate cooler climates and often have rough or spiny skins. Greenhouse cucumbers produce smoother fruits but need extra warmth and protection for success. Some varieties will happily grow indoors or outdoors.

BUY SEEDS NOW

If you're interested in making pickles, we recommend several prolific varieties below that are bred especially for pickling, such as heirloom 'Boston Pickling' or 'Calypso.' For crispy pickles, be sure to prepare them within a few hours of harvesting!

Read Next

- [How to Grow Zucchini & Summer Squash Plants: The Complete Guide](#)
- [How to Grow Green Beans: The Complete Guide](#)
- [Mini-Vegetable Ideas for Small Garden Spaces](#)

PLANTING

Select a site that gets full sun (at least 6–8 hours of direct sunlight per day).

Cucumbers like warmth and lots of light!

Cucumbers require fertile soil. Before planting, add about 2 inches of organic matter (aged manure and/or compost) and a complete fertilizer to the area. The

soggy) and have a pH of around 6.5 to 7.0.

When to Plant Cucumbers

- For an early crop, **sow cucumber seeds indoors** for about three weeks before transplanting them outside. Provide bottom heat of about 70°F (21°C) with a heating pad or place the seed flats on top of a refrigerator or water heater. Sow two seeds an inch deep in each pot, then water well. Once the seedlings emerge, remove the weakest to leave one per pot.
- Outdoors, sow or transplant when soil is about 70°F (21°C), and no earlier than 2 weeks after the last frost date. Cucumbers are extremely susceptible to frost and cold damage. (In cooler climates, warm the soil by covering it with black plastic before planting.)
- Make successive plantings (every 2 weeks) for continued harvests through the season. In warm soil, cucumbers will grow quickly and ripen in about 6 weeks.

Make the Most of Your Available Space

See how many plants will fit and which crops can occupy the same space in your garden at different times of the year.



Cucumber (7 plants) - row length: 15' 4"

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How to Plant Cucumbers

- Sow 4 to 6 seeds directly in the garden about 1 inch deep, 12 to 18 inches apart, in rows 4 feet apart.
- Cucumbers can also be planted in mounds (or “hills”) that are spaced 1 to 2 feet apart, with 2 to 3 seeds planted in each mound. Once plants reach 4 inches in height, thin them to one plant per mound.
- After planting, mulch around the area with straw, chopped leaves, or another organic mulch to keep pests at bay, and bush types should be kept off the ground to avoid disease.
- 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. [See how to build a trellis and support for vining vegetables.](#)
- If you've had pests, cover freshly

ers, netting, or a berry basket; this will keep them from digging out the seeds.

You can also grow cucumbers in containers!

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Check out this video to learn more about how to plant cucumbers.

...umbers From Sowing to Harvest



- When seedlings emerge, begin watering frequently. Cucumbers need at least one inch of water per week (or more if temperatures are particularly high). Inconsistent watering leads to bitter-tasting fruit.
- When you water, irrigate deeply. Avoid getting the leaves wet, as that may encourage leaf diseases that can ruin the plant. If possible, water your cucumbers with a soaker hose or drip irrigation to keep the foliage dry.
- Mulch around plants to retain soil moisture and reduce weeding; however, do not apply mulches until soils have warmed to 75°F. Harvest cucumbers when fruits are young and tender.
- Cover young plants with row covers or berry baskets if pests appear. Continually check for pests or disease.
- When seedlings reach 4 inches tall, thin the plants to two plants per location
- After the vines develop runners, side dress with additional nitrogen fertilizer.



Photo by barmalini/Getty Images

Making a Cucumber Frame

A cucumber frame is a great way to support outdoor cucumbers. Stretch chicken wire or netting over a wooden frame and secure it into place with staples or U-shaped nails. Lean the frame against an A-frame made of sturdy bamboo canes.

Salad leaves such as lettuce can then be grown in the shade of the frame – a clever solution for growing cool-season crops in hotter areas.

Also, see our video on [how how to build a trellis and support for cucumbers](#).

Types

- **‘Boston Pickling’** (vine) is our favorite

- **'Burpless Bush Hybrid'** (bush) is good for small gardens, pots, or pickling.
- **'Bush Crop'** (bush) is a dwarf variety with a high yield. Great for eating fresh.
- **'Calypso'** (vine) is disease-resistant and has a high yield. Perfect for pickling.
- **'Lemon'** (vine) produces round, yellow, super-sweet fruits. Fun for kids!
- **'Parisian Pickling'** (vine) produces long, thin cucumbers perfect for making gherkins or cornichons.
- **'Sweet Success'** (vine) is good for greenhouses, as it requires no pollinators. Produces seedless fruit.

HARVESTING

- Cucumbers should be harvested when they are young and tender! They are picked when immature—before their seeds harden and they become bitter. Do not let them get yellow. A cucumber is of the highest quality when it is uniformly green, firm, and crisp.
 - Harvest regular **slicing cucumbers**

- Harvest **dills** at 4 to 6 inches long and **pickling cucumbers** at 2 inches long.
- The large **burpless cucumbers** can be up to 10 inches long, and some types are even larger.
- **Gherkin varieties** are picked very small – an inch long for crunchy cornichons or three inches long for larger pickles.
- At peak harvesting time, you should be picking cucumbers every couple of days. They'll grow quickly!
- Use a knife or clippers to cut the fruit off the plant. Pulling it may damage the vine.
- Keep on picking! If you don't, as plants mature, they will stop producing.
- Any cucumbers left on the vine too long will also get tough skins and lower plant productivity.

How to Store Cucumbers

- Cucumbers are over 90 percent water. Store wrapped tightly in plastic wrap to retain moisture.

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PESTS/DISEASES

Cucumber Pests and Diseases

Pest/Disease	Type	Symptoms	Control/Prevention
Anthracnose	Fungus	Yellow/brown/purple/black spots on leaves; sunken, dark spots on stems and fruit; spots may develop a salmon-pink, gelatinous mass; eventually, rot	Destroy infected plants; choose resistant varieties; provide good drainage; avoid overhead watering; apply compost; use mulch; rotate crops

Pest/Disease	Type	Symptoms	Control/Prevention
		sticky “honeydew” (excrement); sooty, black mold	with water spray; apply insecticidal soap; put banana or orange peels around plants; wipe leaves with a 1 to 2 percent solution of dish soap (no additives) and water every 2 to 3 days for 2 weeks; add native plants to invite beneficial insects
Blossom-end rot	Disorder	Dark, water-soaked spots on blossom end of fruit (opposite stem) may enlarge and become sunken and leathery	Caused by lack of calcium in fruit, often due to roots failing to obtain sufficient water and/or nutrients. Remove affected fruit; plant at proper soil temperature; water deeply and evenly; use mulch; maintain proper soil pH (around 6.5) and nutrient levels; avoid excessive nitrogen; provide good drainage

Pest/Disease	Type	Symptoms	Control/Prevention
<u>Cucumber beetles</u>	Insect	Holes in leaves/flowers; rasped fruit; plants stunted/die (Bacterial wilt signs: wilting; plants die; ends of cut stems, when pressed together for 10 seconds and pulled apart, release stringy, white sap)	Handpick; mulch heavily; use row covers; destroy plants infected with bacterial wilt
<u>Cucumber mosaic virus</u>	Virus	Varies with plant, but may include stunting, mottled green/yellow/white pattern or ringed spots on leaves/fruit; distorted leaf growth; warts on fruit	Destroy infected plants; choose resistant varieties and certified virus-free seed; use row covers; disinfect tools; weed; control aphids; use mulch
Downy mildew	Fungus	Yellow, angular spots on upper leaf surfaces that turn brown; white/purple/gray cottony growth on leaf undersides only; distorted leaves; defoliation	Remove plant debris; choose resistant varieties; ensure good air circulation; avoid overhead watering
<u>Powdery mildew</u>	Fungus	Typically, white spots on upper leaf surfaces expand to flour-like coating	Destroy infected leaves or plants; choose resistant

Pest/Disease	Type	Symptoms	Control/Prevention
		distortion/stunting of leaves/flowers	circulation; spray plants with 1 tea-spoon baking soda dissolved in 1 quart water; de-destroy crop residue
<u>Squash bugs</u>	Insect	Many small, yellow/brown/black spots on leaves; wilt; scarred fruit	Handpick; crush yellow/bronze egg clusters on leaf undersides; lay boards on soil and check for pests underneath each morning; remove plant debris; use row covers; rotate crops
<u>Whiteflies</u>	Insect	Sticky “honeydew” (excrement); sooty, black mold; yellow/ silver areas on leaves; wilted/stunted plants; distortion; adults fly if disturbed; some species transmit viruses	remove infested leaves/plants; use handheld vacuum to remove pests; spray water on leaf undersides in morning/evening to knock off pests; monitor adults with yellow sticky traps; spray with insecticidal soap; invite beneficial insects

Pest/Disease	Type	Symptoms	Control/Prevention
			weed; use reflective mulch

Little or No Fruit:

- If your cucumber plants do not set fruit, it’s not usually caused by a disease. There is probably a pollination issue. The first flowers are usually all male. Both female and male flowers must be blooming at the same time for fruit to set. 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; male flowers do not have this swelling at the base.)
- Lack of fruit may also be due to poor pollination by bees, especially due to rain or cold temperatures, or insecticides. Do 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.)
- Remember, gynoecious hybrid vari-

cumber plants with male flowers in order to produce fruit.

WIT AND WISDOM

- *Plant cucumbers while you are wearing your pajamas, on the first day of May, before sunrise, and no bugs will eat them.*
- “Burpless” cucumbers have little to no cucurbitacin, which causes bitterness and increases the likelihood of burping by those who consume it.
- If you’re pickling, consider growing dill, a favorite pickling herb! Plant every few weeks into midsummer to ensure a constant supply. [See our Growing Guide for Dill.](#)
- Don’t forget that cucumbers aren’t just for eating. When puréed in the blender, cucumbers make a great summer facial for toning the skin and reducing puffiness.
- With special molds, you can grow cucumbers in different shapes, like hearts and stars!

China before spreading to Europe and points beyond.

- The name for the cucumber evolved from Europeans. To Romans, it was known as cucumerem; the French call(ed) it concombre; the English, who at first saw its value only as animal feed, referred to it as “cowcumber.”

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COOKING NOTES

- See our section on [pickling with lots of](#)

- Enjoy our fun video on [How to Make Easy Refrigerator Dill Pickles!](#)

VEGETABLES

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Catherine Boeckmann

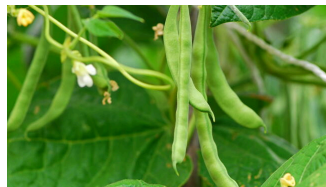


Catherine Boeckmann loves nature, stargazing, and gardening so it's not surprising that she and The Old Farmer's Almanac found each other. She leads digital content for the Almanac website, and is also a certified master gardener in the state of Indiana. [Read More from Catherine Boeckmann](#)

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COMMENTS

ADD A COMMENT

Amakana festus (not verified) 8 months 2 weeks ago

Love the content! It's so detailed and helpful.

REPLY

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PlantoraApp (not verified) 1 year 2 months ago

I really appreciate the depth of research and clarity of presentation in your blog post. Thank you for sharing your wisdom and experiences.

REPLY

Tyler Fallon (not verified) 2 years 1 month ago

Oh! that's a very informative! I will take that into consideration when I start planting round cucumber varieties for my vegetable garden!

[REPLY](#)

Jasemine (not verified) 3 years ago

I really liked this article because it answered everything to the point and brief. Keep it up!

[REPLY](#)

Diane porter (not verified) 3 years 11 months ago

I have learned from experience and also from running my own little tests and cucumbers store much better in your basement or anywhere that is not hot other than the fridge and I have pictures to prove that after having done both at the same time. The cucumbers stored in the refrigerator went bad weeks before the others that had been stored in the basement.

[REPLY](#)

Michael (not verified) 2 years 11 months ago

a basement rather than the refrigerator.

REPLY

The Editors 3 years 3 months ago

Thanks for sharing your experience, Diane! We are all interested in ways to keep the summer harvest fresh!

REPLY

Jance Carter (not verified) 4 years 7 months ago

I have grown lemon, Suvo Long, and pickling cucumbers this year. Despite spring and mid-summer plantings, variety diversity, applying compost, mulching, lots of sun, and spreading the plantings among several locations, I continue to have dismal results. The seedlings always start out strong and begin to fruit very well, but once they reached 6-8", the bottom leaves begin to develop yellow spots, some curl upward, remain very small, and eventually turn

cantly, fruits become deformed, cease to grow or die. The plant, however, continues to languish, producing prolific amounts of male flowers, but it never dies. Do you have any suggestions of what the issue may be?

REPLY

The Editors 4 years 7 months ago

We're so sorry to hear this. It sounds like Cucumber mosaic virus (CMV). This is a virus. The leaves become yellow and curl downwards. The cucumbers become distorted and stunted in size. Take a look at [this page to see which problem matches](#), and take the recommended precautions.

REPLY

Donna (not verified) 4 years 9 months ago

This is my 1st time planting & growing White Wonder cucumber in a half-barrel container.

what the size. What am I doing wrong? Please
help!!!

REPLY

MORE COMMENTS

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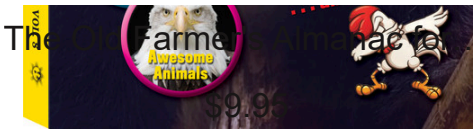


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