



[\*\*Learn To Grow and Cook Peppers Like a Pro! ►\*\*](#)

# Should You Pinch Off Pepper Plant Flowers?

Last updated: 05/07/2023

*Disclaimer: As an Amazon Associate, I earn from qualifying purchases. Pepper Geek takes part in various affiliate programs. This means that purchases through our links may result in a commission for us.*

If you're growing peppers, you want to get the most out of each plant. It can be exciting to see the very first flowers start forming on your plants – more flowers means more peppers, right?

Since we [start our peppers indoors](#) in the late spring, it is not unusual to see flower buds beginning to form in April or May. So that begs the question, should I cut flowers off my pepper plant? We've got the answers for you here on Pepper Geek.



## In This Article:

- [\*\*What are pepper flowers?\*\*](#)
- [\*\*Should you prune pepper flowers?\*\*](#)
- [\*\*How to pick pepper flowers\*\*](#)
- [\*\*When to stop picking pepper flowers\*\*](#)
- [\*\*Why are my pepper flowers falling off?\*\*](#)

---

## Should You Pick Pepper Flowers? (Video):

## Should You Pick Early Pepper Flowers?



## What Are Pepper Flowers?

If you are new to growing peppers, you may see flowers on your plant and wonder what they are there for. Before we had any experience growing, we wondered the same thing.

Well, I left the flowers alone and low and behold, they transformed into tiny peppers!



*Early pepper forming.*

The **flowers on a pepper plant will turn into the actual peppers**. Essentially, the flowers attract insects to your pepper plants, and they pollinate the flowers. Bees, flies, and other insects fertilize the flowers, and the peppers bear seeds.

Peppers self-pollinate, meaning that each flower contains both male and female organs. This means that you don't have to worry about growing multiple plants side by side to get good harvests.

However, sometimes pepper plants will begin flowering too early. A number of factors can cause this, including **small pot size, not enough fertilizer, or irregular temperatures**.

---

## Should I Pinch Off Early Pepper Flowers?

If you are waiting for the weather to warm up so that your plants can safely move outdoors, your plants may start producing flowers prematurely. This is a pepper plant's natural response to limited soil space.

If the plant doesn't have enough soil to continue growing more roots, it will begin the next stage of growth, producing fruit.

Before you move your plants outside, we recommend that you **prune early pepper flower buds off of the plant. Be sure to allow the flowers to grow large enough so you don't damage the young leaves when picking.** Another option is to only pick flowers that begin forming fruits, and leave the rest alone.

However, there are some cases when we *don't* recommend pruning pepper flowers. If you are growing slower-to-produce varieties like ghost peppers or habaneros, you may want to leave early buds to ensure that your peppers ripen.

However, if you are growing faster varieties like jalapenos or bell peppers, early flowers can be pinched back until the plants are a more mature size.



*Early flowers and fruits removed from young pepper plants.*

**Timing is everything!** Early flowers are a sign that your plants need to be up-potted. If you planted your seeds too early, it is very common to have pre-mature flowers.

If your plants have been properly transplanted to larger pots at the right time, the leafy growth will continue to expand. Pepper plants will hold off on producing flowers until the plant has reached a mature size. Be sure to learn how (and when) to [transplant your pepper plants](#).

Plan ahead by scheduling your seed starting according to your planting zone. There's nothing worse than planting *too early* and having [root-bound plants](#) eager to get outside!



*Early bell pepper and flower buds on small plants.*

## Fertilizing Properly

Using the right fertilizer in early-stage pepper growth can change how many early flower buds your plants produce. During early plant growth, pepper plants prefer **higher nitrogen**.

This helps the plants produce stems and leaves as opposed to flowers and fruit. If your fertilizer is low in nitrogen, consider switching to something with a higher volume.

For early stage growth, we recommend using one of these fertilizers for pepper plants:

- **Fox Farm Grow Big** – Part of a 3-pack fertilizer regimen.
- **Miracle-Gro Organics**

After your plants have reached maturity (usually mid to late July in the Northern Hemisphere), you can either reduce the amount of fertilizer or switch to something with less nitrogen.

Keep in mind, **we mostly use fertilizer for potted plants**, while in-ground gardens need less. If you have a raised bed or an in-ground garden, we recommend composting and amending the soil once or twice per year for nutrients.

---

## How To Pick Pepper Flower Buds

The last thing you want to do is to damage your pepper plants while pruning flowers. You'll want to **work carefully to avoid removing or damaging any leaves while removing buds**. To help you avoid this, here are a few tips for picking early flowers.

- If the buds are tiny, let them grow larger before picking
- Use tweezers or pruning shears for smaller flowers
- If using fingers, don't pinch, just pluck in an upward motion



*Unopened flower buds on pepper plant (too early to pick without damaging young leaves).*

Pepper plant flowers tend to grow in tight bunches right around newly developing leafy growth. Each flower is usually surrounded by new leaves. **If the flowers are tiny, it is best to leave them until they are easier to pick.**

We found that using tweezers helps get a more precise pluck. With larger flower buds, it is safe to just use your fingers and pull the flower off in an upward motion.

**Tip:** It can be painful to remove your plant's progress, but fret not! Healthy pepper plants will *always* produce more flowers later on.

**If you have any tiny peppers growing too early in the season, pick those off too!** When fruits are growing, the plant is focusing all of its energy on growing the fruits and seeds rather than leaves and branches.

---

## When To Stop Picking Pepper Flowers

At some point, you have to stop picking your pepper plant's flowers. After all, the flowers are what grow into the peppers, so when should you *stop* picking them?

In general, **stop picking pepper flowers when your plants have been in their final planting location for 3-4 weeks.** This allows the plants enough time to grow a healthy root system and form strong branches and leafy growth. In the Northern hemisphere, we stop pruning flowers around mid June (Zone 6a).

After 3-4 weeks of being in their final location, the pepper plants should be maturing to a healthy size. The plants will then be ready to set fruit and begin producing peppers. Give your plants enough time to produce fully ripened peppers by the end of the season!

One potential exception is if you live in an especially cold climate. For you far-Northerners, you may want to allow flowers and fruits to form earlier to allow your

fruits to ripen before your fall frost date. **Pay attention to the ripening time of your pepper variety, and your location's first frost date.**

**Note:** Nutrients can help encourage your plants to form more flowers and fruits instead of more leaves and branches. Switching to a [lower-nitrogen fertilizer](#) halfway through the year is key!

## Why Are My Pepper Flowers Falling Off?

During late-stage growth, you want your pepper plants to have lots of flower buds. The more flowers, the more potential peppers. So why are your pepper flowers dropping off instead of growing into peppers?

There are a few possible reasons this could be happening. Let's go through the possibilities. *Learn more about [pepper flowers dropping here](#).*

### Over-fertilizing

After your plants produce flower buds, it is time to change up your fertilizing regimen. We switch from a high nitrogen fertilizer to a lower nitrogen blend. If you continue to use a fertilizer high in nitrogen, your plant may continue to expand and produce more leaves rather than buds.

By reducing your fertilizer amount or nitrogen content, you help encourage the plant to begin producing flowers. Providing too much nitrogen is a leading cause of pepper flowers dropping off.

After we start to see lots of flower buds on our mature plants, it can help to switch to a lower-nitrogen fertilizer like [Fox Farm's Big Bloom](#). The 3-stage regimen keeps things simple for fertilizing peppers with confidence.

Alternatively, you can simply reduce the strength or frequency of your fertilizing regimen. By reducing the nitrogen and optionally increasing phosphorus and potassium, you can encourage higher productivity.

Some pepper growers even stop fertilizing all together in early August. We have yet to experiment with this, but anything is better than providing too much nitrogen.

## Over-watering

If you've read our article on [watering pepper plants](#), you'll know that over-watering is one of the most common mistakes home gardeners make when growing peppers. It is easy to over-care for your peppers, and providing too much water is not good!

Pepper plants are happier when slightly dry as opposed to soaking wet. They need to have moist roots, but they also require good drainage. That is why [growing in pots](#) is a good option, especially for first-time pepper growers.



*Cayenne peppers growing in small pot.*

Whether you have pepper plants in pots or in a garden bed, make sure that water can escape from the root system of your plants. Too much water will suffocate the roots and can cause [yellowing leaves](#), leaves and flowers dropping off, and even root death.

## Hot or Cold Temperatures

Peppers like warm weather during the day. This means daytime temps around 75-80°F and night-time temps above 60°F. Having temperatures above or below these can cause stress for the plants.

Excessively hot temperatures can be a cause for dropping flower buds. If you expect to have a heat-wave with temps above 100°F, plan to move your plants into the shade and feed plenty of water. This will help avoid too many dropped flower buds.

If you are expecting cold weather below 55°F, consider bringing your potted pepper plants indoors for the night. If you have plants in the ground, you can temporarily cover them with [floating row cover](#) for some temporary protection.

There could be other reasons for dropping flower buds (poor pollination, disease, etc.), but these are the most likely culprits.

---

### Read Next:

- [Growing peppers from seed](#)
- [Why do pepper leaves curl?](#)
- [Common pepper problems](#)

I hope this guide helped you decide how to treat your early pepper flowers. Are you planning to pick them all off? Just some of them? Let us know in the comments below.



**Calvin**

*One of the original Pepper Geeks! When [Calvin](#) isn't gardening or learning more about peppers and botany, he might be traveling new places or playing some music.*