

Cucumbers 101

There's nothing better in a salad than a fresh crisp slice of cucumber. There are two types of cucumber plants. The garden space available will determine which type is best suited for your garden.

- **Vining cucumbers** are the most common varieties. These plants grow fast and can sprawl around the garden.
- **Bush cucumbers** are ideal for containers and small gardens.

Growing cucumbers.

- Cucumbers need full sun and well-draining enriched soil. Side dress with a general vegetable fertilizer throughout the growing season to maximize harvest. Always follow label instructions.
- Sow seeds or transplant seedlings when the soil temperature reaches 70 degrees, and at least two weeks after the last spring frost. Cucumbers are very susceptible to frost and cold damage.
- Make successive plantings (every 2 weeks) for continued harvests throughout the season.
- Cucumbers can also be planted in mounds (or "hills") that are spaced 1 to 2 feet apart.



Growing cucumbers vertically. Vertical growing requires less garden space. Vining varieties grow best when trained up a trellis or fence. Growing 'off the ground' allows more sunlight to reach the leaves, better air flow for disease prevention and a cleaner, easier harvest.

- The structure should be 5-7 feet tall and be strong enough to bare the weight of heavily fruiting vines.
- Stake the structure firmly to the ground to prevent it from falling during windy conditions.
- Sow seeds or plant seedlings at the base of the trellis, spacing each plant 12 inches apart.
- The vines will initially require training to the trellis.
- Gently tie the main stem to the trellis with soft garden twine. Avoid using knots or wire that can damage the vines.
- Wrap the tendrils around the support structure as they grow.
- Check the vines regularly to make sure they are climbing up the structure.

Pruning cucumbers. Pruning cucumber vines can help increase airflow, reduce disease, and focus the plant's energy on producing more fruit.

- Remove any yellowing or damaged leaves to keep the plant healthy.
- Pinch off the side shoots or "suckers" that grow in the leaf axils to encourage the main vine to grow taller. A few can be left to increase yield but not so many as to shade out other vines.
- To control the height of the vine, pinch off the growing tip once it reaches the top of the trellis.

Harvesting cucumbers.

- In warm soil, cucumbers will grow quickly and ripen in about 6 weeks. Harvest the fruits when they reach the plant tag identified mature length (usually 6-8 inches long) and are firm and dark green in color.
- Regular harvesting will encourage the plant to produce more cucumbers.
- To prevent damage to the vines, use pruning shears or a sharp knife to cut the cucumbers from the vine.

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