

How to grow cucumbers

Cucumber (*Cucumis sativus*)

Family: Cucurbitaceae (Cucurbits)

Season: Warm

Ease of growing: Easy

Nutrient needs: Medium

Water needs: Medium

Common propagation: Seed

Seed facts

Germination temperature: 60°F to 105°F

Germination time 3 to 10 days

Viability: 2 to 5 years

Direct sow: late May to June

Transplants

Start: 2 to 3 weeks before last frost

Weeks to grow transplant: 3 to 4

Plant out: late May to June

Planning facts

Typical spacing: 12" in 5' to 6' rows

Plants per square foot: 0.5

Days to harvest: 45 to 70 from seed; 35 to 60 from transplants

Variety selection

Cucumbers are classified by two primary uses: slicing types for fresh eating and pickling types for processing. You can use slicing types for pickling if you pick them while they are small, but pickling types don't produce good slicers. Varieties are available that are resistant to common diseases. Some varieties are "parthenocarpic," which do not require pollination to set fruit. These are advantageous in greenhouse situations or where only one or two plants are grown.

Preparation and planting

You can grow the plants in rows in groups of plants called "hills" or on top of your compost pile where vines trail down and cover an otherwise unattractive pile of decaying organic matter. Seeds or transplants are usually planted one week after the area's [average frost-free date](#), when soil temperatures reach 60°F. The planting window continues until about June 20 in central Michigan. Six to seven seeds are usually sown per hill and later thinned to the strongest three. To save space, train plants to grow on a trellis.

Care

Floating row covers provide beneficial extra heat early in the season and also protect cucumbers, and other cucurbits, from striped-cucumber beetles. However, be sure to remove the row covers once plants have flowered to seed and allow insect pollination.

Major pests

Insects: Seedcorn maggots, striped cucumber beetles, cutworms, squash bugs, thrips and aphids.

Diseases: Bacterial wilt, powdery mildew, gummy stem blight, alternaria leaf spot, anthracnose, angular leaf spot, phytophthora and several mosaic viruses.

Harvest and storage

Harvest once the desired size has been reached. Harvest pickling cucumbers daily. Remove any fruit from the vine that won't be used or production will cease. The fruit will keep in the refrigerator for about a week. For best quality, use pickling cucumbers immediately.

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