

HOME HORTICULTURE

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MICHIGAN STATE
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EXTENSION



Michigan
Groundwater
Stewardship
Program

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Information Packet was Compiled from the Michigan State University Home Horticulture Database.

Pepper

Peppers require full sun and grow best on mineral soils, but will tolerate most well drained soils with a pH of 6.0 to 6.8. Peppers produce earlier on sandy soils. Peppers are usually set in the garden as transplants. Seed started indoors develops suitable transplants in 8 to 10 weeks. Planting outdoors is done in late May. Space plants 2 feet apart in rows 3 feet apart. Avoid planting too early, peppers grow little at temperatures below 50 degrees Fahrenheit and are injured by just a hint of frost. Hot peppers will not influence the flavor of other peppers. If no other fertilizer was applied, use 2 cups of 12-12-12 per 25 feet or row. Immediately after flowering give each plant 1/2-cup fertilizer applied in a 2-foot circle around the plant. A starter solution may be used at transplanting. Peppers benefit from a 3-inch mulch. Proper watering prevents fruit drop and blossom end rot.

Harvest crisp, firm fruits that have reached maximum size. They can be picked green or when colored. Cut the pepper, taking some of the stem with the fruit. Frequent picking increases yield.

The first symptom of blossom end rot is a light colored, sunken, water-soaked spot near the bottom of the fruit. The spots enlarge and shrivel. A third of the fruit may be involved with blossom end rot. Causes are high temperatures and low humidity or low water supply when the fruit was set.

High temperatures during bloom can cause blossom drop. Blossom drop can occur when night temperatures are higher than 78 degrees Fahrenheit and day temperatures are higher than 90 degrees Fahrenheit. Drying winds may also be a factor.

Pepper Facts

Availability: mid July through mid October

Days to Maturity: 60 to 90 days from transplanting

Approximate Yield/10 feet of row: 6 pounds

Per Person Requirements: Fresh: 3 to 5 plants or Preservation: 3 to 5 plants

Weights: 1 bushel = 25 pounds

3 peppers = 2/3 pound or 1 pint frozen

Pepper Insects

Cutworms

Plants are clipped off at ground level. The insects injure the plants at night and hide in the soil during the day. Plants grown on black plastic are more susceptible. Damage from later generations is less severe since the plants are larger and better established.

Potato Beetles

Adult potato beetles are yellow and black but the larvae are red. Early damage is most severe at the growing tips but becomes more general as the insects spread.

Aphids

Green peach aphid sucks sap causing a downward leaf curl. The insect is a carrier of mosaic.

Flea Beetle

Flea beetles are 1/8 inch long, black, bronze, or blackish with light lines. They eat many small holes (shotholes) in the leaves. The larvae feed on roots.

Hornworm

Hornworms are large green caterpillars with a prominent horn. They eat large amounts of foliage. A small number of the insects can be controlled by hand picking.

Fruitworm

The adults migrate from the south and injury occurs when the larvae tunnel in the fruit. The larvae also travel from fruit to fruit.

Pepper Diseases

Bacterial Spot

Small, yellowish green spots form on young leaves. On old leaves, spots have dark margins and the centers are dead and straw colored. Rough corky spots form on the fruits. Old leaves turn yellow and drop. The disease is seed and soil borne.

Cercospora Leaf Spot

Round water-soaked spots form on leaves and stems. The spots enlarge to 1/4 to 1/2 inch and turn white with dark margins. Infected leaves drop.

Mosaic

Mosaic causes curled and mottled green and yellow leaves. The fruit are yellowed and show green ringspots. The plants are stunted and produce less. Grow mosaic resistant varieties.