



# Chillies

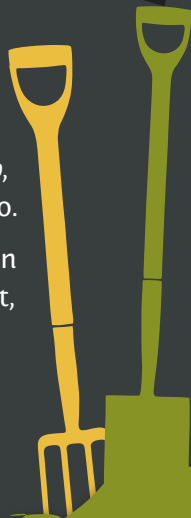
Spice up your pizza with a selection of chillies. Widely used in many cuisines as a spice to add “heat” to dishes they make a great pizza topping.

Just remember the hot flavour increases with the maturity of the chilli fruit and comes from the white pith and seeds inside – how much heat can you handle?

The most common unit of measurement for heat in chilis and peppers is Scoville Scale. With peppers ranging from 0 -2,000,000 SHUs, this scale is exact and great for food production and testing, albeit a bit complicated.

As spicy foods increase in popularity, so do specific flavours. Consumers are not just selecting products based on heat level; now, they prefer specific flavours such as serrano, jalapeno, and habanero.

Because of the vast variability of flavours and heat, chili peppers can complement almost any dish. For smokiness, add chipotles. For heat, add jalapenos or habaneros; for a sweeter taste, add bell peppers.



## Chillies

Growing your own chilli peppers means you can choose from a huge array of colours, shapes, flavours and levels of heat. Follow these steps to get delicious chillies in no time!

### Choose your chilli plant

Chillies come in all shapes, sizes and colours ranging from tiny pointed extremely hot, bird's eye chilli to the large mild fleshy peppers like Anaheim.

Many chilli varieties are available to buy in supermarkets but you will have a much greater range to choose from if you grow chillies yourself. They're very easy to grow from seed and even easier to grow from ready-grown chilli plants. They grow best in containers, which means they are perfect for a sunny patio or balcony.

### Sowing time

- > Grow them in a greenhouse or raise them in pots on a south-facing patio or windowsill.
- > Plant up outside in June

### Planting your chillies

Chillies need a warm, sunny spot for the best results and the hottest chillies. Ideally, grow them in a greenhouse or raise them in pots on a south-facing patio or windowsill.

It is best to grow your chillies in 30cm pots of peat-free, multi-purpose compost. Wait until all risk of frost has passed before moving them to their final growing positions outside, in a sunny spot.

For the hottest chillies, grow in a greenhouse. Chillies are tender plants, so will not survive the winter.

Make sure your pot has good holes in the bottom to allow good drainage.

Fill 30cm pots up to halfway with compost, then carefully transfer your chilli plant into the pot, before filling and packing with more rich soil.

### Crop Care

Once planted out, chillies require very little attention. Pinch out the growing tips when plants are about 20cm tall to encourage bushy growth. Tall varieties may need staking.

Water your chilli plants regularly but do not keep the soil too wet. The soil must be free draining. As soon as the first flowers appear, add a liquid fertiliser every two weeks. Then add a potassium fertiliser every time you water when the fruits have begun to swell.

In hot weather, mist chilli plants to increase humidity and deter spider mites.

### Harvesting your chillies

Pick your chillies 15 – 18 weeks from transplanting. It can vary when fruits are ready due to weather and positioning.

Chillies can also be allowed to dry and store for later use. When needed, use the chillies dry or allow the fruit to soak in hot water prior to use.