

How to Grow Your Own Chillies

Chillies are used in a huge range of recipes and are easy plants to grow. Chillies will grow outdoors, but they do best in pots both outdoors and on the windowsill. Different varieties can be mild and sweet, or fiery enough to blow your head off! Popular medium-heat varieties are habanero, cayenne and jalapeño. Meek and Mild is best if you don't like spicy chillies. And Scotch Bonnet or Prairie Fire are truly hot chillies for the brave!



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Sow	•	•	•									
Harvest							•	•	•			

How to look after me

Soil: Rich and moist

Position: Sunny, very warm

Location: Indoors, outdoors, growbag, container, conservatory

Sowing

- Sow chilli seeds in fine potting compost roughly 6mm deep
- Put the seeds in a heated propagator or cover with a plastic bag and place somewhere warm like an airing cupboard
- Keep at 18C to 25C until they germinate, which can take up to a month. Make sure the compost is always just moist
- Once they germinate, bring the seedlings out and place on a bright, warm windowsill
- When the seedlings are large enough to handle, prick out to 9cm pots
- Water regularly with tepid water as they grow. Keep soil moist but not soaking



Did You Know?
A chilli's heat is measured in Scoville units - a high score means a hot chilli. Jalapeños score 2,500 to 10,000 Scoville units, Cayenne is 30,000 to 50,000 and Scotch Bonnet is 100,000 to 350,000

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Growing

- When the first flower appears, transplant the chillies into larger pots filled with general purpose compost
- From May onwards, you can also plant them out in the garden. Prepare the soil well and space the plants 50cm apart
- Alternatively, keep the plant indoors on a sunny windowsill or in a conservatory
- Pinch out the top growing tips to encourage more fruiting side branches
- Help pollination by touching the inside of the all the flowers with a cotton bud or fine paintbrush to spread the pollen
- Tall varieties may need staking with canes and string when they reach over 20cm tall
- Water regularly, especially in warm weather, and feed every fortnight with a general purpose or tomato fertiliser. Feed from when the first flowers appear to when the fruit is all picked

Harvesting

- Cut chillies off when they have reached their full size. They ripen from green to yellow, red or purple, and can be eaten at any colour as long as they are full-size
- Picking regularly will increase the amount of fruit the plant produces
- Leave some chillies to go a deep red colour before harvesting. This will reduce the productivity but it gives the deepest flavour

David's Top Tip

Store chillies by drying them. Thread them on string and hang them up somewhere warm and dry for four to six weeks. Or dry them in the oven. Preheat to 100C, spread whole or halved chillies out on baking parchment. Cook for 10-15 minutes, checking every few minutes to make sure they don't burn. Store in a sealed jar