



The Phantom Gardener

Organic from the start, sustainable for the future

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Cucumbers

Cool as a cucumber! There's nothing like munching on crisp cucumbers to beat the heat. There are many cucumber types: picklers, slicers, gherkins, and lemon cukes, to name a few. Cucumbers grow best during the long, hot days of summer, with maximum sunshine and warm nights. The plants won't tolerate cold temperatures.

1. Prepare. Loosen soil to a depth of 8 to 10 inches using a shovel or tiller. Mix in some compost or slow-release fertilizer to provide plants with nutrients. Then rake the soil smooth, removing any large clumps and rocks.

2. Plant. There are cucumber varieties that form long vines and bush varieties that form a low mound. Provide support for vining types — a trellis, tepee, or netting strung between stakes. If planting in a row, sow cucumber seeds about an inch deep and 6 inches apart. Or, plant cucumber seeds around the perimeter of a tepee. To plant, either poke a hole with your finger and place the seed in the hole, or use a hoe to create a shallow furrow. Cover seed with soil and press gently.

3. Grow. Once seedlings are a few inches tall, thin them by removing extra plants so the remaining ones are about a foot apart for vining types, two feet apart for bush varieties. Water soil to keep it moist — dry soil leads to bitter cukes. Pull weeds that sprout nearby. Apply organic mulch to control weeds and conserve soil moisture, keeping the mulch an inch or two from stems.

4. Enjoy. Harvest cucumbers when they reach slicing or pickling size, removing any that get over mature. Frequent harvesting encourages plants to continue producing.

At a glance

Exposure:
Full sun

Planting time:
After last spring frost
(usually after May
15th)

Planting depth:
1 inch deep

Spacing in row:
6 inches apart; thin to
1 foot apart.

Time to harvest :
50 to 65 days,
depending on variety.

Bush varieties grow
well in containers.

