

## GROW IT

## SWEET PEPPERS

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## Get It

- 🔥 Transplants are often best for gardeners because peppers can be challenging to germinate and grow. Plus, you can harvest tasty fruit faster (only 50-70 days from transplanting).
- 🔥 Look for stocky plants with a healthy green color. Avoid plants with thin stems or yellowed leaves. Locally grown transplants are the best choice for planting in Tennessee.
- 🔥 Try Alliance, Red Knight, King Arthur, Flavorburst or Mecate bell peppers and Carmen, Escamillo and Cornito Giallo Italian frying peppers. Eros, Cute Stuff Red, Cute Stuff Gold, Just Sweet and Yellow Sparkler are good options for smaller sweet fruit.

## Plant It

- \* Do not plant peppers until the soil has warmed up and the last frost of the season has passed, which is typically late April to mid-May in Tennessee.
- \* Peppers will need approximately six to eight hours of direct sunlight per day and need soil or potting mix that drains well.
- \* Plant 12-18 inches apart in ground or in 1 square foot in a raised bed.
- \* Containers (make sure they have good drainage) can also be a good option. Start with a pot that can hold 3-5 gallons of potting mix.



## Grow It

- ★ Adding granular fertilizer at planting will provide nutrients for the growing plant. A 4-foot-by-8-foot raised bed could be fertilized with  $\frac{1}{2}$  to 1 cup of 10-10-10 fertilizer. Evenly mix the fertilizer into the top 2 inches of soil or growing mix.
- ★ Don't let the soil or potting mix dry out, but make sure to not grow the plant with saturated soils because peppers will be much more prone to disease. Mulching will help retain moisture.
- ★ Peppers should also receive some fertilizer during the growing season. You can add 1-2 tablespoons of water soluble fertilizer labeled for fruiting crops in 2-4 gallons of water weekly in a 4-foot-by-8-foot raised bed to keep the plants growing and producing well.

## Pick It

- ◆ Peppers are typically ready to harvest 50 to 70 days after transplanting, but smaller fruited types can be earlier.
- ◆ Cut the fruit from the plant instead of pulling to reduce the risk of stem and leaf damage.
- ◆ Harvest when full sized, and remember green peppers are simply immature peppers and will mature to red, orange or yellow. These mature, colored fruits will be more likely to have pest and disease issues because they are on the plant longer.

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