



### **Versatile and Variety**

There is no more interesting or versatile culinary vegetable (officially a botanical fruit) than the pepper. Peppers (genus *Capsicum*) are used in every cuisine in the world and range from very mild varieties of bell peppers to the very hot-to-fiery peppers (e.g., Habanero, Jalapeno, Serrano). Peppers are good for your health and when eaten raw, have few calories and are usually a “free” food on food plans and diets. They contain more vitamin C by weight than citrus fruit. Although hot peppers may give some folks indigestion, there is no link between their consumption and stomach ulcers. Because of their undeserved reputation or limited variety of starts available locally, gardeners either skip peppers or plant the mundane bell and wax varieties. Finding the perfect pepper for our climate is not that difficult and with a little effort and daring -- trying new varieties will wake up old recipes and introduce you to unbelievable favor.

### **Decision Points for the Pepper Novice**

There are only three decisions you need to make when deciding to add peppers to your garden.

- What will I do with them?
- How many do I need?
- Will they grow here?

### **What Will I Do With Them?**

The first year I grew peppers. I had trouble deciding which to plant. I started 23 (yes twenty-three) different varieties. When my wife Wendy found what I was doing, her second response, after “you’re crazy”, was. “What are you going to do with all of those peppers?” I answered with all the fervor of a new convert. We would fry Aconguas , cook salsa with the Jalapenos, Anaheims and Serranos, make pepper jelly with the Fresnos, brew hot sauce with Scotch Bonnets and Rooster Claws ,pickle the Pepperoncini and the sweet and hot Cherry peppers and dry the cayennes and anything else I missed.



---

<sup>1</sup> Brian is a Master Gardener since 2007 and serves on the Master Gardener Foundation Board. He grows peppers in North Bend and can be found “spicing” of the Snoqualmie Valley Farmer's Market MG clinic. He can be reached at [bryw@centruytel.net](mailto:bryw@centruytel.net).

We did make a lot of different things in 1995. I know it was 1995 because that is the year marked on all the jars of serranos and haberneros in my storage closet. I believe a thousand years in the future confused archeologist will find my stash and determine that the upper Snoqualmie Valley was a center of sub-tropical agriculture. The moral of this story is obvious if you need a couple of haberneros for a jerk seasoning or a handful of serranos to spice your chile go to the supermarket and get a few. If like some of us you make salsa by the gallon or have serious roasted anaheim dependency then by all means fresh peppers are the best.



**How Many Do I Need?**

Once you have decided what you are going to do with them you need to figure out how much is enough. Fortunately most recipes can be doubled, tripled, halved, quartered or otherwise fractionalized. With just two of us in our house we do just fine with two plants of a bell or gypsy for fresh use. Depending on your taste a typical 16 pint salsa recipe will use the contents of half a healthy jalapeno bush or about a cup, and the production of two or three Anaheim plants, about four cups. If you plan on canning cherry peppers four to six plants should be plenty. When deciding what you can live without the very hot and the very unusual plants are normally the best candidates.

**Will They Grow Here?**

All peppers are tropical or sub-tropical plants or descended from them. To achieve maximum growth with few exceptions the plants should never be exposed to temperatures less than 55 degrees F. So you should always look for plants with the earliest maturity ideally 75 days or less. Remember that these maturity dates are usually for six to eight week old transplants that are being set out somewhere where it is warmer than here. Typically you can add 30 days to the date of the seed package for the privilege of living in the cool damp Puget Sound region. I normally won't set my plants out until around July 1 under cover. That being said it is always a good idea to check out local or nearby seed suppliers as they have the experience of growing in our climate

**Great Pepper Choices for the Northwest**

Here are a few peppers with expected maturity dates successfully grown in our climate:

Sweet Hot	Medium Hot	Hot
Cubanella (70 days)	Cherry Bomb (70 days)	Bulgrian Carrot (65 days)
Acongue (80 days)	Fish (80 days)	Caloro (80 days)
Banana (70 days)	Fresno Chile Grande (75 days)	Cayar Cayenne (60 days)
Buran (80 days)	Jalapa (60 days)	Goat Horn (75 days)
Calwonder (75 days)	Early Jalapeno (65 days)	Hungarian Super (70 days)
Cherry (80 days)	Pizza (70 days)	Indian Calcutte (65 days)
Gypsy (60 days)	Big Jim Anaheim (75 days)	Rooster Spur (70 days)
Lipstick (70 days)	College Anaheim (65 days)	
Pepperoncini (75 days)	Espanola (70 days)	
Pimento Supper Red (70 days)		
Tequila Sunrise (80 days)		