

## Starting from seed

- Select early maturing varieties (60 to 75 days)
- Use seeds sold for current year (old seeds don't germinate well)
- Plant seeds ¼" deep (indoors or greenhouse), in flats with new or sterile planting materials; do not "pack" soil, just water in seeds (warm H<sub>2</sub>O)
- pH of about 6.5
- Use full spectrum fluorescent bulbs; a fan will help prevent fungal disease
- Mist seedlings with lukewarm water, not a hose, and keep them moist, not too wet
- Fertilize (lightly) when you see first true leaves, when you transplant, and at fruit set (embryonic nutrients last thru cotyledons)
- BDG will start hot pepper seeds about March 8, and sweet pepper seeds about March 15. Hot peppers take longer for all stages....
- Use heat mats (85F) until germinated only – otherwise they get too needy
- Once germinated with first set of true leaves, transplant to 4" pots – about 3 weeks for sweet, 4 weeks for hot. Should average 90% germination
- A 2<sup>nd</sup> transplant may be needed – BDG will transplant to quart pots May 1
- **Or, skip all this and buy starts from the Bellevue Demo Garden May 12<sup>th</sup>!**

## Transplanting to the garden

- Harden off the seedlings for a week or two before planting in the garden. Meanwhile heat garden bed with clear plastic
- Select a spot with direct sun 6+ hours per day; maybe plant on the south side of a "berm"
- BDG will transplant from the greenhouse to the garden the first week of June (night time temp above 55F)
- Once planted, use row covers if cool in June; if night temps below 55F (plastic over cages)
- BDG uses 33" tomato cages for support
- Use balanced fertilizer 5-10-5 or 10-10-10; do not over fertilize, especially Nitrogen (just get more leaves)
- Water requirement is 2" per week, especially after fruit set

# Pepper Cultivation

## March 2018

- No overhead watering, and try not to put cold water directly on roots
- 85F in the day, 70F at night is PERFECT, but abnormal in PNW
- Fruit sets if night temperatures are between 55F and 80F, and daytime temperature is less than 95F

### Reaping the Harvest

- Harvest period is Mid July through September. Usually it gets too cold in October, and fruits stop progressing. Pick them while you can – green is edible
- Plants with small fruits are generally more productive, and ripen faster
- Picking early fruit while still green will encourage more fruit set
- Picking small fruits and flowers off at the end of the season will encourage remaining fruit to hurry up and ripen
- Try withholding water until “wilty” – 2 or 3 times during the season to encourage ripening
- Peppers will turn color and get more flavor after picking, but the heat will not intensify once picked
- DRYING the peppers will intensify the heat

### Handling Peppers

- If you work with hot peppers, be sure to protect yourself
- Wear DISPOSABLE rubber gloves when handling (especially cutting) hot peppers
- Avoid touching eyes, lips, nose
- Do not inhale powder – wear a mask
- Neutralize the capsaicin with degreaser before washing (capsaicin is alkaloid oil)
- Then lots of soap and water to wash hands. The oils can stay in your skin for over 24 hours...
- Dairy, tomato juice, or acidic juice - best ways to soothe mouth