

# CUCUMBER

*Cucumis sativus*

Cucurbitaceae

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## ECHO® PLANT INFORMATION SHEET

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### Description

Cucumbers probably originated in India and became popular in Greece and Italy. They are now grown worldwide both commercially and in home gardens. The fruit of this vegetable plant is thick, cylindrical, 25-37 cm (6-10 in) long, and shiny green. It can be eaten raw in salads, pickled or cooked in stews or stir-fry dishes. Its leaves are hairy both above and below and are very sensitive to frost. It has a high water content. Male and female blossoms are on the same plant and are pollinated by bees. Cucumbers are used commercially in lotions to soften facial skin, heal and soothe damaged skin and as a natural sunscreen. Its seeds are consumed as a diuretic.

### Common Names

- Spanish
  - Pepino
  - Pepinillo

### Cultivation

Cucumbers are not suited to high mountain climates or very dry seasons. Best results are with daytime temperatures of no lower than 15° C (60° F), humidity of 80-90%, and rainfall of 100-200 mm (4-8 in) per month. Organic manures, mulch, full sun, cages or trellises all encourage lush foliage and blossoms. Before soil and air temperature warm up, seeds may be started inside or in a sheltered environment and transplanted outside when all danger of frost is past. The roots and the soil surrounding them should be disturbed as little as possible. It is best to start seeds in peat pots or newspaper cups which can be planted with the transplants.

### Harvesting and Seed Production

Picking Cucumbers frequently will encourage more blossoms to form. Harvest by cutting the stem or with a quick, upward snap. For consuming raw, the Cucumbers should be picked when they are still straight and are solidly green (60-70 days), though some cultures prefer them more mature. The ripe stage, when seeds inside are mature, is approximately 5 weeks later when Cucumbers have turned yellow. Split the ripe Cucumber lengthwise, scoop out the seeds, put seeds in a clear container and cover with water to ferment for 3 days. The good seeds should settle to the bottom. Rinse, then dry the seeds on a screen or absorbent paper either indoors or outdoors. Store in an airtight container in a cool place for up to five years.

### Pests and Diseases

Cucumbers are susceptible to many viruses, bacteria, molds and insects. An all-purpose mixture of 1 gallon (3.8 L) of water, combined with a medium spoonful of baking soda, a drop of liquid dish soap and a drop of mineral oil sprayed on both sides of the leaves, every 3-4 days will discourage some diseases. Sterile soil for germinating seeds will prevent "dampening off". Nematode damage is less prevalent when plants are growing in soil rich in organic matter.

### Cooking and Nutrition

The fruit of the Cucumbers is commonly eaten when it is unripe as the seeds are more palatable. It is eaten raw in salads or sliced with vinegar. Preservation is by pickling. Cucumbers can also be cooked with butter and dill or made into soup or stir-fried. Home grown Cucumbers do not need to be peeled before eating. Young leaves and stems may be cooked as a green vegetable.

### References

[Plants for a Future](#)

[Prota4U](#)

[WikiSpecies](#)