

HOW TO GROW HOT CHILIS

You'll need:

- Pepper seeds
- Potting soil (Sterile seedling mix without peat.)
- Plastic growing tray with holes for drainage.
- Seed germination warming mat
- Distilled water
- Plastic wrap
- Labels

Fill growing tray $\frac{3}{4}$ full with potting soil. Moisten thoroughly with water and allow to drain completely.

Always use distilled water. Make an indentation with a pencil eraser approx $\frac{1}{4}$ " deep or less, about every 1 inch in the soil. Place one pepper seed into each shallow hole and cover gently with soil. Label your tray now. I write on a sticker with a sharpie pen, and place it on the side of the trays.

Place the growing tray onto the germination mat and warm to 85 degrees during the day in bright light. Cover with plastic wrap to maintain humidity. Uncover for a few hours each day for air exchange. (When the first seed sprouts, do not use the plastic wrap anymore.) Turn off heat at night, but **never** let the soil temperature get colder than 70 degrees.

Water the growing tray from the bottom. That way the top soil will never be disturbed, and the soil will take up the right amount of water. Water often enough to keep the top of the soil moist (and the germinating seed moist!).

Seeds will germinate in 7 to 21 days. The New Mexico #6 and the Espanola Improved germinate slower than the others.

Fertilize 3 weeks after germination with half strength organic fish fertilizer.

Plant your little pepper plants outside in your garden after the temperature no longer drops below 55 degrees at night. The plants can be spaced every 24 inches.

Keep your garden soil evenly moist. Fertilize with organic fertilizer, and add calcium if needed.

GOOD LUCK!

All peppers are perennials, although they are most commonly sold as annuals. You can cut the full size green fruits off the plant, or wait longer until they change color. If you do not get full size fruit this season, get a head-start next year by bringing your plants inside this fall. Plants can be grown in large terra cotta containers of potting soil year-round. Just bring your pots inside when the nights drop below 50°F. Your plants will drop their leaves, and then grow new ones. They can be placed back outside when the nights are consistently above 55°F.