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### **Growing Chilli Peppers**

If you use our new Germination Powder, make up solution, soak seeds for 1 hour take them out and put on dry kitchen paper to dry naturally for 10 – 20 minutes, do not pat dry just leave them to dry themselves and then plant.

#### **Germinate Seeds: Repeat process for each variety you plant**

Take 2 bits of kitchen paper, put both bits together and fold in half. Damp the paper (as wet as a wrung-out sponge) In one quarter of it place the seeds and fold it over itself like a sandwich. Place the kitchen paper which is a quarter, inside a freezer bag, catch some air inside and tie a knot in it, like a balloon. Label the bag and place in a warm place such as an airing cupboard or heated propagator. Repeat for each variety. Check seeds every 2 days and damp down the paper if they start to dry out. Once your seeds have sprouted you can transplant to small pots i.e 75 mm. (We use multi purpose compost with vermiculite mixed in to aid drainage.) Add water to your compost and mix well; it should be as moist as a wrung-out sponge before you put it into your containers. Ideally you want the compost to be in a warm place before planting takes place so as not to shock the seedlings. Fill your containers 25 mm from the top. We use a plastic plant label or pencil to pick the seedling up and drop it in the middle of the pot, do not worry which way the seedling is facing it will sort its self out as it grows. Sprinkle a little compost over the seedling. Water to settle them in with a spray bottle. Label with a plastic stick label using a permanent marker pen. As the seedlings grow use a spray bottle to keep them moist. You can always seal the top with cling film with a tiny hole in. This keeps the seeds warm but they can breath.

#### **“Potting On” Your Seedlings**

When you can see some roots through the hole in the bottom of the pot you can re pot your plant. A standard progression is, 75, 150 and then the final 200 mm. First, fill the new containers with moistened compost, make a hole of the right depth for your seedling to sit into. Lift the tiny plants carefully with the help of a pencil pushed from the underside of the pot through the drainage hole. The less the roots are disturbed, the better. Lower each plant into the hole you've made and plant it in its new home. Peppers (unlike other plants) will make new roots along their buried stems, so if your seedlings are leggy, you can transplant them so that their stems are covered by the soil up to the base of the bottom cluster of leaves. Gently firm the soil around the transplants and water carefully.

Once your plants set fruit, start feeding once or twice a week with a good all-purpose liquid fertiliser such as Miracle-Gro, or a general Tomato Feed diluted half-strength. Always follow the manufactureres recommendations. Better still try **Chilli Focus**, this chilli plant food is a precise formulation for optimal performance of chillies in pots, grow bags or even in the ground. You can buy it from our website. With Chilli Focus plants can be fed from the seedling stage onwards. The recommendation is to feed weekly but this can be increased as needed. As long as foliage is dark green then feeding is adequate but if it becomes pale then feeding can be increased. Increase frequency of feeding rather than feed strength. Plants can be fed up to three or four times per week without problems.

Most hot peppers and some sweet peppers require insect pollination to form fruit. If the proper insect is absent, or if the local insects are not attracted to your pepper flowers, you may see the plants flower and never set fruit. This is especially true for hot peppers grown indoors or in a greenhouse.

Pollen is produced on the stamens, and usually ripens between noon and 3 PM every day. Take a moistened watercolour paintbrush, and pick up some pollen on your brush and transfer it to the other flower centres. You can get close to 100% fruit set with hand pollination.

Flowers do not form or will drop off and fruit will not set if the temperature is much below 17C.

The Jolokia family of seeds can be tricky to germinate and do benefit from the germination solution and a germination temperature of between 80°F and 89°F. The flowers also benefit from hand pollination with a paint brush. The Jolokia seeds can take between 7 and 28 days to germinate.

It was noted by The Chile Pepper Institute that the Bhut Jolokia chilli never produced fruits without artificial pollination in the greenhouse, and little pollen was produced (which means their flowers might need a little help with a fine brush indoors). Do not leave your chilli plant on a window sill over night as temperatures can drop and it will not do your plant any good.

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