

Cucumber

Cucumis sativus



Seed Starting/Propagation:

- Can be started indoors a week or two before the last frost date, they do grow best sown directly.
- Presoak and plant directly in the soil after last frost date.
- Plant two per square foot or 6" apart, about 1/2" deep, in full sun.

Care:

- Because of the high water content in cucumbers the soil needs to stay moist all the time. Water a couple times a week and keeping them mulched will help with this.
- Do not let leaves get wet since this can spread fungus and disease.
- Train the vines up a cage, trellis, fence, etc.
- Keep an eye out for cucumber beetles and other pests and disease, see below.

Companions:

- Plant with beans, peas, and sunflowers.
- Corn protects cucumber against viruses that cause wilt.
- Planting a couple radish seeds around the cucumber protects against cucumber beetles.
- Avoid planting with potatoes and aromatic herbs.

Pests & Problems

- Cucumber beetles; as mentioned above you can plant a few radish seeds around the cucumber plant, don't pick the radishes but let them grow all season, even going to seed.



Annie's Place

- Nematodes; boil half cup of sugar in two cups of water and spray onto the plant. The sugar will dry them up and also attracts pollinators.
- Downy mildew; make a strong tea using chives and/or horsetail and use as a spray.
- Rotate the crop each year.

Harvesting/Preserving:

- Cucumbers need to be harvested regularly to keep the plant producing more cucumbers.
- Cut the fruit stem from the vine at any size, although you do not want them too big. They taste best when young.
- They do not store well unless you are pickling them, so eat fresh and eat often. Or use as directed in the healing section below.

Seed Saving:

- Let the fruit grow to full maturity so they get very large and turn either yellow or brown. Cut in half lengthwise and scoop the seeds out into a jar or bowl.
- Add enough water to cover the pulp and let the mixture ferment for three days, stirring daily.
- Strain and rinse really well, removing all pulp and bad seeds.
- Spread out on a screen to dry for a week or two, then store in an air tight container for up to 5 years.

Healing & Nutrition:

- Skin conditions of all kinds; itchy, inflamed, irritated, dry, eczema, rashes, and sun burn. Apply the sliced fruit or juice externally and/or eat or drink internally.
- Arthritis and gout - drink the juice or eat daily.
- Inflamed and strained eyes - apply cucumber slices to closed eyes, replace with fresh slices as they become hot.
- Kidney tonic
- Lung support
- Bone strengthening and building
- Lower fevers due to the cooling properties
- Cleansing and cooling (hence the term "Cool as a cucumber")
- Mild diuretic
- Electrolyte - consume to replace lost electrolytes through sweating, vomiting and diarrhea.
- Vitamin C and K, potassium and antioxidants.