

Growing Groceries



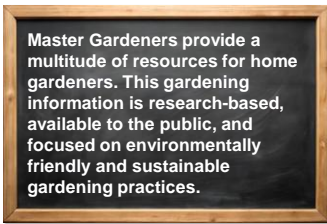
Grow the "Other" Edible Nightshades Peppers, Tomatillos, Eggplants

Jean Jones
April, 16, 2025



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Notices



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Tonight's Agenda

THE BASICS

- Intro To Growing Peppers and Eggplants
- Propagation
- Transplanting

PEPPERS

- Care, Harvest and Eating
- Varieties

EGGPLANTS

- Care, Harvest and Eating
- Varieties

- Pests and Problems
- TOMATILLOS



photo by Jean Jones

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The Basics

getting started



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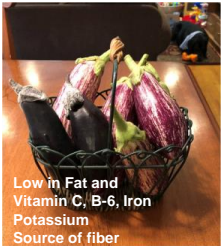
Yes you can!



Photos by Jean Jones

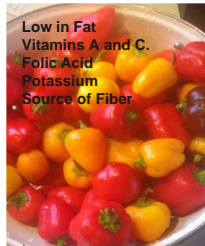
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Why Grow Your Own



Low in Fat and Vitamin C, B-6, Iron Potassium Source of fiber

- Healthier
- Flavor and Freshness
- Specialty Varieties
- Ethnic Cuisines
- Fun



Low in Fat Vitamins A and C, Folic Acid Potassium Source of Fiber

Photos by Jean Jones

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Buying Transplants vs Starting from Seed

Transplants

Pro:

Easier, time saving, bigger plants
Buy small plants and up pot to save money

Con:

May not find the variety you want



photo by Jean Jones

Starting you own

Pro:

more variety available
fun

Con:

Time
Space and equipment required
Expense

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Eggplants

Soil Temp for Germ.	Seed Depth	Days to Emergence	Thin Plants To	Row Spacing	Seed Life	Fertilizer Needs
75—90°F	1/4"	5—17	12—18"	24—36"	2 years	High

Peppers

Soil Temp for Germ.	Seed Depth	Days to Emergence	Thin Plants To	Row Spacing	Seed Life	Fertilizer Needs
70-90°F	1/4"	8—25	12—18"	24—30"	2 years	High

territorialseeds.com

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Peppers and Eggplants From Seed

- Use good seed and seed starter mix
- Start indoors not outdoors
- Require soil temp of 70-90 degrees to germinate
- Use heating pad and grow light
- Up pot one or two times



Photos by Jean Jones

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Choosing a Planting Site



photo by Carol Miles-WSU

- Fertile
- Well-drained
- High organic matter
- Full sun (at least 6 hours)
- pH 6.0 – 7.5 slightly acid
- Didn't have solanaceous crops in that spot for two years
- Peppers and eggplants also do well in pots!
- Can follow early crops such as peas, lettuce, spinach or pak choi

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Transplanting to Garden

- Soil temperature is most important. 65-70 degrees
- Consider pre-warming soil
- Harden off
- Raised beds vs. in the ground
- Planting depth and spacing
- Use complete, balanced fertilizer at time of planting and a shovelful of compost around each plant



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Keep Your Plants Warm



<https://extension.umn.edu/yard-and-garden-news>



amazon.com



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Peppers Care, Harvest and Eating



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Caring for Pepper Plants

- To fertilize or not to fertilize? (Know your soil!)
- Heavy calcium and phosphorus
- When plants begin to flower fertilize with high phosphorus for best yield.
- Stake or use tomato cages
- Keep moist but not soaking



photo by sean.soren



GUARANTEED ANALYSIS	
TOTAL NITROGEN (N)	3.0%
3.0% Water Insoluble Nitrogen	
AVAILABLE PHOSPHATE (P ₂ O ₅)	16.0%
CALCIUM (Ca)	18.0%
Derived from: Bone Meal	

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Remember I'm a Tropical Plant

- KEEP WARM!
- Peppers will set fruit between 65-85 degrees
- Regular water and mulch
- If using a cloche remove it when the plants begin to flower for better pollination



photo from pinterest.com



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Mulches for Your Vegetable Garden

<https://extension.illinois.edu/blogs/good-growing/2022-01-20-common-mulches-used-vegetable-garden>

Consider water and airflow, ease, reusability, compostability

- Shredded wood mulch
- Arborist chips
- Newspaper
- Straw
- Grass clippings
- Shredded leaves
- Plastic
- Landscape fabric/geotextile
- Biodegradable plastic
- Paper sheeting



photo from pinterest.com

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Ripeness is a Matter of Degree

Color and size are best indicator

Sweet peppers

- All are green and edible before they turn color
- Picking the peppers while green will encourage more production

Hot peppers

- Hotter if left to ripen to red



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Some Like it Hot

Pepper Varieties

It's a matter of taste and what you want to use them for.

Choose varieties proven to grow in PNW



Photo by Marcia Dillon

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So Many Types, So Little Space

Sweet:

Bell type



Photo by Gia Parsons

Uses

- Fresh in salads, sandwiches or snacking
- Blanch, stuff and bake
- Chop and add to any meal
- Chop and freeze
- Charred and roasted
- Sweet pepper sauces



Photos from Johnny'sseeds.com

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So Many Types, So Little Space

Mild:



Lola



Hatch Green Chile Freshly Picked

Varieties

- Lola * Pepperoncini * Habanada
- Italian Sweet * Sweetie Peppers
- Waltz-80 * Hatch green chile

Uses

- Fresh
- Smoked and roasted
- Pickled
- Dried
- Stuffed

Photos from territorialseed.com and hatch-chili-pepper.com

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So Many Types, So Little Space



Hot Varieties

- Jalapeno * Hungarian Hot Wax *
- Serrano Hot Rod * Thai Red * Fireball *
- Cayenne *and more

Cooking Uses

- Pepper Jelly
- Dried Chilies or Chile Powder
- Hot Pepper Sauce
- Eat raw (if you dare)

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So Many Types, So Little Space

HOT!:

Habanero, Pequin, Ghost and so many more



territorialseed.com



https://www.burpee.com



https://www.burpee.com

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Other Popular Varieties

Variable hotness or mild and hot on same plant

Harvest before they become red

My favorite way to eat these

Saute with a little olive oil in a hot iron skillet or wok until the skins bubble and char slightly and flesh softens. Serve with a sprinkle of Kosher salt. Eat the seeds, stems and all.



padron



shishito

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Peppers for Drying

Paprika

Usually made from a sweet or mild pepper such as Waltz



territorialseed.com

vs

Cayenne

Made from hot peppers



Johnnyseeds.com

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Eggplants Care, Harvest and Eating



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Caring for Eggplants

- Heavy feeders
- Dress with compost at time of planting
- Fertilize with high nitrogen (21-0-0) when first fruit starts to appear at rate of 1 ½ teaspoons per plant
- Require 1-2 inches of water per week. Keep evenly moist.
- Support plants with stakes or tomato cages



photo by Jean Jones

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Harvest and Storage

- Check for ripeness with the thumb test
- Harvest when skin is still glossy!
- Leave calyx attached (beware of spines)
- Cool (55 degrees) in perforated plastic bag
- Do not refrigerate!
- Use quickly they have a short shelf life.



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So Much Beauty

Three general types

- Large oval
- Asian elongated
- Novelty types (all others)



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Popular Varieties

Novelty types



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Have a Sunny Patio or Deck?



2-4 inch long fruit Minimum 2 gal pot Feed regularly
 Gretel, Fairy Tale, Hansel, Patio Baby

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Cooking With Eggplant

Can be eaten many ways

- Sauteed
 - ratatouille
 - Imam Bayildi
- Grilled
- Stuffed
- Roasted (Baba Ganoush)
- Breaded and Fried (eggplant parmesan)
- Asian stir fries
- Can be frozen but best if cooked or blanched first

BUT NOT RAW

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Cooking With Eggplant

Salting

- What is this
- Recommended in most recipes
- Reduces the amount of oil the eggplant will soak up
- Rids eggplant of excess moisture so it doesn't exude too much liquid during cooking
- Removes bitterness???

Peeling

- Depends on the recipe
- Leave on for color and if dish will cook long enough for skins to be as soft as the flesh
- Skin is more tender on younger and Asian varieties

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Cooking With Garden Vegetables

Recipes for all your vegetables PLUS

- Essential gardening info
- Storage and preserving
- Marketing (selecting choice vegetables and fruits)
- Other helpful hints



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Pest Management-Diseases

Jean's first rule

Don't panic!



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6 Steps to Avoiding Disease

- 1. Certified seed or plants
- 2. Crop rotation
- 3. Proper growing conditions
- 4. Careful watering
- 5. Good air circulation
- 6. Cleanliness



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Pest Management-Diseases

Curly top (Western yellow blight)

Mosaic viruses



<http://wci.colostate.edu/shtml/CurlyTopSymptoms.shtml>

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Pest Management-Diseases

Verticillium wilt

How to Identify Verticillium Wilt



Gradual wilting of plant; yellowing of lower leaves



Internal discoloration of vascular tissue, yet surface root tissue appears healthy

avdc.org

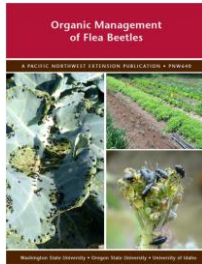
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Pest Management-Insects

Flea beetles



<http://hortsense.cahnrs.wsu.edu>



<https://pubs.extension.wsu.edu/organic-management-of-flea-beetles>

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Pest Management-Insects

White flies and aphids



photo from <http://hortsense.cahnrs.wsu.edu>

- Feed on plant sap on the underside of leaves
- leaves may wilt, turn yellow and drop
- Honeydew may be present on the leaves below those infested
- Primarily infest greenhouse grown plants
- Check plants before buying
- Insecticidal soaps
- rinsing off with hose
- Check Hortsense

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Pest Management-Insects

Brown Marmorated Stink Bug



Symptoms of feeding injury on pepper fruit from the brown marmorated stink bug.
Photo Source: Todd Hickey, Washington State University, Skagitway County Extension



Brown marmorated stink bug, Egg cluster
Photo by M. Booth



Photo Source: M. Booth, Oregon State University



<https://treefruit.wsu.edu>

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Cultural Problems (mostly peppers)

Blossom end rot

Physiological leaf roll

Sunburn



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Corking on Peppers



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More information

[WSU Extension Publications](#)



FS149E



FS220E

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What to Remember for Successfully Growing Peppers and Eggplants

1. Don't plant outside until June
2. The plants should be in gallon pots and large when they go out
3. The soil must be 65 degrees or warmer
4. Keep covered with a cloche as long as you can.



photo by Jean Jones

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Easy to Grow

- 650-85 days until harvest
- Soil Temp for Germ 70–90°F
- Seed Depth ¼"
- Soil Temp for Transplanting 55°F
- Fertilizer Needs High
- Spacing 3 feet
- Readily self seed
- Must have more than one plant



<http://www.superseeds.com>

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Care

- Require support
 - a large tomato cage is best
- Regular water
- Keep weeds down



photo by Heidi McKibbin Cooper

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Harvesting and Storage

- Ripe when the husk splits
- Fruit tends to fall to the ground easily
- Store in husk in cool dry place
- All parts of plant are poisonous except fruit



photo by Gia Parsons

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Varieties

- 'Cisneros' - large green fruit
- 'Toma Verde' - early, large greenish yellow fruit
- 'Purple' - small deep purple fruit



Tomato Growers Supply



Burpee Seeds

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What do you do with a tomatillo?

- Salsa verde
- Soup
- Salads
- Chicken chile verde
- Avocado salsa verde



<https://littlespicejar.com/homemade-salsa-verde-tomatillo-salsa/>

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Thank You!

And now for some closing announcements before questions...

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Resources

- <https://pubs.extension.wsu.edu/vegetables-growing-peppers-in-home-gardens-home-garden-series>
- <https://pubs.extension.wsu.edu/growing-eggplant-in-home-gardens-home-garden-series>
- [Territorial Seed](#)

PHOTO CREDITS

If not sited on slide, photos are my own, or from Washington State University Extension publications or clip art.

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Upcoming Presentations



Growing Groceries
2025 Warm Season Series
Wednesdays 7:00pm-8:30pm



Date	Class
Wed, April 16	Growing the 'Other' Edible Nightshades: Peppers, Tomatillos, Eggplant
Wed, April 30	Roots and Rare Fruits
Wed, May 14	Grow Cukes, Squash and Melons- Big and Small
Wed, May 28th	The Nutritional Powerhouse: Corn and Beans (legumes)
Wed, June 11	Summer Starts for Fall and Early Spring Harvests
Wed, June 25	Caring for Community: Master Gardener Demonstration Gardens

PNW Garden Savvy
2025 Series 2
Saturdays 9:30am-10:30am



Date	Class
Sat, April 12	Gardening with Children
Sat, April 26	Plant It Where the Sun Don't Shine
Sat, May 3	Protecting Our Unsung Heroes, Our Pollinators
Sat, May 17	Understanding King County Soils for Better Gardening
Sat, May 31	Rain Gardens
Sat, June 7	Deer Resistant Gardening

More info: <https://kingcounty.mastergardenerfoundation.org/education>



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Master Gardener Resources



Ask a Master Gardener

Visit: <https://extension.wsu.edu/king/ask-a-master-gardener>

Become a Master Gardener

For information on King County Master Gardener training (including signing up for the email notification list), visit: <https://extension.wsu.edu/king/gardening/become-a-master-gardener>

Applications for the 2026 class will open in September 2025

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Thank you for the support!



is brought to you by



- King County Master Gardener Program**
<https://extension.wsu.edu/king/gardening>
- Demonstration Gardens
 - Plant Clinics
 - Education Outreach
 - Science-based Publications



- Master Gardener Foundation of King County**
<http://www.mgfk.org>
- Fundraising for these programs

More information about growing groceries:
<https://kingcounty.mastergardenerfoundation.org/education/gg/>

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Questions?



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