

Hort Short **Snohomish County Master Gardener** **Issue#**
Cucumbers

Cucumbers, a versatile vegetable

Cucumbers are easy to grow in the home garden and there are many varieties to choose from depending on how you will use them.

Types of Cucumbers

- Slicing and eating fresh cucumbers
- Pickling cucumbers
 - Generally picked between 3-6 inches long
 - Can be eaten, though it is best to peel them first.
- Novelty cucumbers exist, including round lemon, foot-long Asian, yellow and Mexican sour.
- Most cucumbers mature within 50-70 days. Western Washington gardeners should select the plants with shorter growing season.

Planting Site for Cucumbers

Sun

- Cucumbers need 8 hours full sun exposure daily

Soil

- Cucumbers need well-drained, fertile soil.
 - A soil test is the only way to be sure your soil has sufficient nutrients.
- Soil should contain high levels of organic material.

Water

- Cucumbers have moderate to high water needs.
- Naturally, more water is consumed during hot dry spells.
- Observation is the key. Check plants and soil daily.

Space

- Cucumbers grow between 3 to 5 feet in a season so they need space to spread.
- Air circulation is imperative to reduce diseases.
- Cucumbers grow well on trellises, which saves space, aids airflow, and makes harvesting easier.
- Plant 4-5 seeds in hills spaced 4-5 apart.

Seeds

- Purchase seeds from catalogs and garden centers.
- Seeds may be started indoors 4-5 weeks before planting outside.
 - This gives the plants a head start.
- Plant seeds directly outdoors when soil temperature reaches 55 degrees.
 - This method is easy to do as long as the temperature permits.
- Seedlings and plants grow the best when daytime temperatures are between 70 and 95 degrees.

Maintenance during Growing

Blooming plants need to be observed for signs there might be problems.

- Leaf wilting is the most common sign of stress in the plants. Causes:
 - Too much water
 - Too little water
 - Check the root zone; it should be moist and pliable, not dripping.
- Stunted leaves or yellowing leaves.
 - Sign of low soil fertility.
- Failure to produce flowers or fruit
 - Sign of low soil fertility.
 - Female blossom receives pollen and produces blooms (look for round growth at the base of the flower).
 - Male blossom provides pollen only. These drop off without producing flowers.

Integrated Pest Management

Most insect infestations and diseases can be prevented or limited by using observation and easy gardening practices.

- Limit overhead watering to reduce disease.
- Water regularly. Water-stressed plants invite insects.
- Keep the area clean of decaying leaf matter.
- Check plants regularly to help recognize when a problem is beginning.
- Check WSU Hortsense for pests and their solutions.
- Remember, these plants rely on pollinators so use caution when using insecticides.

Resources

Soil Temperature Guide for Washington. <https://weather.wsu.edu/?p=89750>

Vegetables: Growing Cucumbers in the Home Garden. Washington State University Extension Factsheet FS069E. <https://pubs.extension.wsu.edu/growing-cucumbers-in-home-gardens-home-garden-series>

Washington State University Hortsense. Factsheets for Cucumbers, Pumpkins, and Squash. <http://hortsense.cahnr.wsu.edu/Search/MainMenuWithFactSheet.aspx?CategoryId=5&PlantDefId=55>