

COOL CUCUMBERS

GARDENING SEASON

July to September

Some common varieties include: English, Gherkin, Kirby, and Ridged.

CHOOSING TIPS

Choose well-formed, uniform cucumbers with an even dark green color. Cucumbers should be firm, with no soft spots. A yellow color or large size indicates lower quality.

STORAGE

Refrigerate in a plastic bag for up to 10 days.

PREPARATION

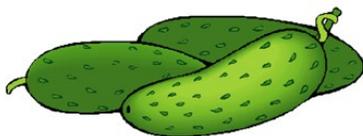
Rinse with cold water and slice. For large wedges peel off the skin, cut lengthwise, quarter, and skim off the seeds. Cucumbers can be used in salads, sandwiches, vegetable platters, or pureed and used in a vegetable dip.

To Cook:

Cut into wedges and remove the seeds. Simmer for a few minutes, or until tender. Drain, return to the pan, and season.

KEY NUTRIENTS

- ♦ Potassium to maintain normal blood pressure.
- ♦ Fiber to prevent constipation.



RECIPES

Cucumber & Tomato Salad

- 1 large tomato
- 1 cucumber
- 1 small onion
- 1 tablespoon fresh dill
- Salt
- 2 green chile peppers, chopped
- 1 tablespoon each vinegar, oil and lemon juice



Cut tomato into 10 wedges. Peel cucumber; cut it in half lengthwise and then into thin slices. Cut onion in half lengthwise and then slice it paper thin. Put onion slices into a bowl, sprinkle with salt and mix well. Pat onions dry with paper towel. On a platter, arrange in succession a row of tomatoes, cucumber slices and onion pieces. Sprinkle with dill, salt and chili peppers. Mix vinegar, oil and lemon juice and pour enough into the salad to moisten it well. Serves 6; 40 Cal; 2.5g fat.

Cucumber & Yogurt Dip

- 1 1/2 cups plain low fat yogurt
- 1/3 cup sour cream
- 2 large cloves garlic, minced
- 2 medium cucumbers, peeled, grated and squeezed dry in paper towels
- 2 tablespoons fresh mint, chopped
- 1 tablespoon fresh cilantro, chopped
- 1 1/2 teaspoons olive oil

In a serving bowl, combine yogurt, sour cream, garlic, cucumbers, mint, cilantro and oil. Cover and refrigerate 6 to 8 hours. Serves 10; 55 Cal; 3 g fat.

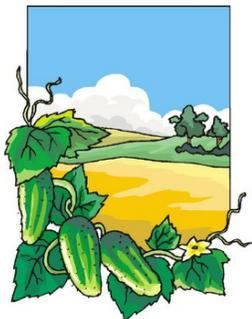


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Growing Cucumbers in Wisconsin

Squash, pumpkins, cucumbers, and melons are all members of the Cucurbit family. Cucurbits are warm season annuals.

The cucumber plant produces cucurbitacin which concentrates in the skin. Removing the skin can make cucumbers easier to digest. Vine crops are an excellent choice for bringing weed-infested areas into production.



Planting Cucumbers

- Cucumbers require full sun and temperatures between 60° and 75°F are best
- Vine crops are challenging to transplant
- Transplant after all risk of frost has passed and soil temperature is 60°F
- When transplanting, be gentle with roots
- Seed in northern Wisconsin in the first two weeks of June
- Seeding depth: 1 to 1 1/2 inches deep
- Space between rows: 36 to 72 inches
- Space between plants: 8 to 12 inches
- Cucumbers can be grown in trellises in a greenhouse to extend the season

Soil and Fertility

- Well drained soils are best
- Irrigate on sandy soils
- Follow soil test recommendations
- Cucumbers grow best in pH from 6.0 to 6.8

Under optimum soil test levels apply...

3.0 oz of nitrogen per 100 sq ft

0.4 oz of phosphate per 100 sq ft

1.1 oz of potassium per 100 sq ft

Vine crops need adequate nitrogen for growth, fruiting, and color development, however, excessive nitrogen can cause bitterness.

Selecting Cucumber Varieties

Choose varieties that are resistant to multiple diseases. Cucumber classifications include pickling, slicing, greenhouse, and gherkin. Slicing varieties are long and tapered with smooth, glossy green skin and a few white spines. Some slicers are “burpless” types because they have been bred to contain lower levels of cucurbitacin. Pickling cucumbers tend to be smaller, blunt, angular, warty, and light green colored with black or white spines. Greenhouse varieties are seedless slicing types so they do not require insect pollination. The skin is dark green and they have a milder flavor than field cucumbers. Gherkins are of a different species than regular cucumbers. They are small, oval, and prickly.



Handling Your Cucumbers

Harvest cucumbers by hand when fruit reach a marketable size. Field grown slicing cucumbers typically are harvested at 6 to 8 inches long while greenhouse cucumbers are 14 to 16 inches. Harvest three times a week when fruit is growing rapidly to sustain plant production. Oversized fruit left on the vine will prevent subsequent fruit production.

Wipe cucumbers clean or wash them in a water bath. Cucumbers can be packed in waxed cardboard boxes lined with a clean damp cloth to provide humidity. Cucumbers can be stored for up to 2 weeks at 40°-45°F and relative humidity of 85-95%.

