Ornamental Peppers

Capsicum annum



Characteristics:

Dimensions: Size varies by variety, but most will be around 18" x 12"

Growth Habit: Mounded, Upright

Foliage: Foliage color varies from glossy green of varieties like 'Sangria' and 'Red Missile' to variegated purples like 'Calico' and black leaves of 'Black Pearl'.

Blooms: Plants produce small white blooms, followed by colorful peppers. Peppers will often begin one color and mature to another shade. They're often found in orange, yellow, red, purple, black, and green.

Hardiness: Frost tender, grown as an annual.

Toxicity: Keep pets away from your pepper plants. Aside from spicy foods not being good for them, ingesting large amounts can harm pets.

Care Requirements:

Light: Very bright light with a minimum of four hours of direct sun. Like most peppers, ornamental peppers will do very well in a warm, sunny spot with good air circulation. They can still make a nice display as a seasonal houseplant in a eastern or western window that gets at least minimum required hours of sunlight. With too much shade, plants might become leggy.

Water: Aim to keep the soil moist, but not wet. When watering, make sure to water slowly and thoroughly. In the landscape, deep and less frequent watering is preferable to "a little everyday". In containers, do not let your peppers sit in water once it has drained. Peppers that are grown in soils that stay too wet can be susceptible to wilt diseases and leaf spots. Both over and under-watering can cause flowers to drop, which will affect the amount of peppers (and ultimately color!) your plant produces.

Soil: Rich, well-drained soil. If planting into beds, compost can be worked in to the top layer of soil. Bagged organic garden soil will work. Potting soil is find for containers or house plant specimens.

Fertilizer: Fertilize regularly through the season. For a granular feed, a bedding plant food with a decent middle number (phosphorus) will work. Supplement with a liquid feed twice

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a month if you need to get your plant producing some peppers, but avoid overfeeding. Excessive nitrogen use can cause large plants with sparse peppers.

Uses:

- Branches can be used in cut flower arrangements and dried peppers can be used in decoration
- Containers, landscape borders, fillers in hanging baskets, short-term houseplant

Although *Capsicum annum* are technically edible, it's not a good idea to eat ornamental peppers. They are grown mainly for their attractive qualities than flavor. Since they are not sold as edible or culinary use plants, growers and retailers might use systemic chemicals to keep them disease and pest free. If you're set on trying one, make sure that you wait a month or more and use newly produced fruit. Their flavors vary, but most are described as being very hot and lacking flavor.

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