

HAIL THE KING OF HOME-GROWN FRESHNESS

Nothing compares to the freshness of home-grown fruits and vegetables. A plump tomato sliced straight from the vine or an ear of corn taken directly from the stalk and dropped in a pot of boiling water—these are tastes that you just can't get in the supermarket. While novice gardeners may be intimidated by the prospects, **Burpee** Home Gardens aims to change that with its line of garden-ready vegetable and herb plants available at garden centers nationwide.

Taking the guesswork out of starting your own vegetable or flower garden, **Burpee** offers helpful tips from the time you plant until harvest day and beyond with suggestions for storage, serving, and even recipes. With five easy steps to growing fresh herbs and vegetables, **Burpee** recommends starting small in a sunny spot; thoroughly prepare the planting area and soil and remove stones, grass, and weeds; select supplies and plants (make sure your selections are foods you'll actually eat); keep well watered and watch for signs of disease or insect damage; and, finally, harvest and enjoy!

One easy to grow variety is the Bush Champion Cucumber—perfect for small gardens or patio containers. If space is an issue, consider growing vertically on a trellis, fence, or other support, as it will contain the vines and keep them from sprawling throughout the garden, and with better air circulation and sunlight, they will produce more cukes. Water deeply once a week, as frequent but shallow watering will reduce overall yields. Apply an all-purpose vegetable garden fertilizer

when your plant begins to set fruit. These plants will produce huge 11-inch cucumbers. Be sure to check out **Burpee's** website for the recipe for Lemon Balm and Cucumber Soup.

For a versatile fresh herb, the Boxwood Basil, with its compact, small leaves is great for pesto or as an ornamental plant. Just keep the soil evenly moist and feed with a vegetable fertilizer to ensure a bountiful crop. When harvesting basil, cut it back to about 1/4-inch above a node, which is where the branch meets the main stem. Be sure to leave enough foliage on your plant so it can continue to grow.

For peppers, the Jalapeño Gigante can measure as much as five inches long. Perfect for salsa or stuffing as poppers, these jumbo delicious (and hot) peppers are easy to grow in any sunny garden or large patio pot, and can be harvested throughout the summer when they're green or red. For support, loosely tie the plants to stakes using rubber bands to allow for expansion. Don't use wire twist-ties or twine which will gradually choke off or even snap the stem. Water in moderation from the moment you plant them until the end of the season. However, they won't tolerate saturated soil or excessive fertilizing. Peppers can be harvested at any stage of growth, but their flavor doesn't fully develop until maturity. Frequent harvesting increases yields, but at the sacrifice of flavor. If you continually pick the peppers before they mature, the plants will continue to produce

fruit in their quest to develop viable seed. When picking peppers, refrain from tugging on the fruit, which may break off a branch or even uproot the entire plant. Use sharp

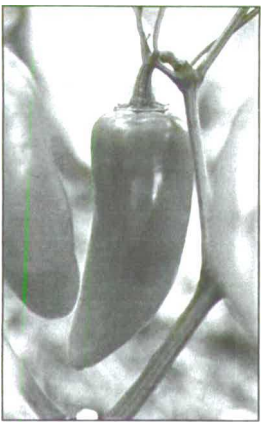
garden pruners to cut the tough stem. Extra peppers can be frozen, pickled, or dried.

The Red Delicious Hybrid is a sweet and mild pepper that is great fresh in salads, sautéed, roasted, or grilled. With small, three-inch fruits, Red Delicious grow well in sunny vegetable gardens and patio pots. Harvesting can begin as soon as two months after planting.

Costa Rican Sweet Hybrid Peppers are ruby red with more flavor than most sweet bells and are terrific in salads or sliced for dipping. They grow six-inches and also grow well in sunny gardens or patio pots. They should be kept well-watered and are delicious roasted or grilled as well.

Gourmet Blend Lettuce is a colorful looseleaf mix that combines Grand Rapids, Royal Oak Leaf, Red Salad Bowl, Salad Bowl, and Ruby. To make the most of limited garden space, plant lettuce around taller vegetables such as broccoli, Brussels sprouts, peppers, and eggplants. The lettuce helps to keep the surrounding soil moist and cool, and the taller plants provide needed shade for the lettuce as the days get warmer. Lettuce can be harvested any time after true leaves form: for full heads, cut the plant right at the soil line, or, to keep the plants producing longer, harvest only the outer leaves as needed.

For more information, planting and maintenance tips, and recipes, visit www.burpee-homegardens.com.



Jalapeño Gigante Peppers

2106-ACT



Boxwood Basil & Gourmet Blend Lettuce

Week's Best

THESE GARDENING PLANTS ARE A REAL LIFE SAVER

Gardening Can't Get

ALL THE BEST

SEE PAGE 4 AND 5