

CUCUMBER GROWING GUIDE

Cucumber is a member of the cucurbitaceal family native to Africa.

It is a deep-rooted annual crop with plenty of tendrils.

CLIMATIC AND SOIL REQUIREMENTS

Cucumbers require an optimum temperature of 25-28C and night temperatures of not lower than 20c to germinate, 25-30c and 18c night temperatures to grow.

Cucumber plants are deep rooted therefore they need well drained, fertile soils low in soluble salts and free from soil borne pests and diseases.

Green house cucumbers generally grow quite well in a wide range of soil PH (5.5-7.5)

The soils should be at least 1.2m deep and sandy loam soils is preferable to light sand or clay.

Well decomposed organic matter can be worked into the soil before planting to increase nutrients levels and water holding capacity.

Seeds can either be sown directly into the soil or germinated in trays using peat moss.

If direct seeding is used, the soil temperatures should not be below 13c to avoid uneven germination.

PLANT NUTRITION

To optimize performance, soil nutrition amendment is necessary. It is required that farmers do soil analysis which will serve as a base for coming up with a fertilizer program. Apply Farm yard manure

Basal application of phosphorus during the early stages for root development. This can be applied during transplanting.

Top dressing with Nitrogen based fertilizers such as Urea and CAN for vegetative growth.

During flowering and fruit formation use of compound fertilizer (NPK) is recommended. Fertilizer with high K (Potassium) in formulation will give better results.

Weekly application of foliar feeds (can be mixed with pesticide sprays) can also foster better plant development.





TRANSPLANTING



Cucumbers roots are very sensitive and care must be taken during transplanting not to damage them.

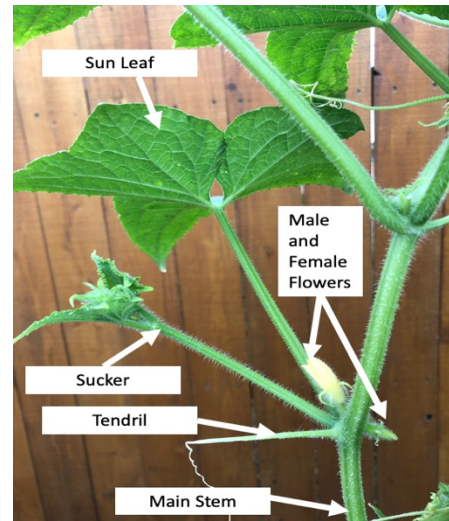
Spacing: 60 cm by 60cm for both out -door and green house varieties.

This should ensure good air circulation and adequate light for fruit production.

If cucumbers are to be grown on beds a spacing of 1.2M -1.8 M bed centre to centre, then 2 rows can be done on the beds.

TRELLISING AND PRUNNING





To obtain optimum production, a proper balance is needed between the vegetative growth and fruit growth. This balance is achieved by constantly pruning of shoots and foliage. If the leaves are too dense it will shade fruits from sunlight causing them to be pale or unevenly colored.

If fruits are not pruned and many are allowed to form at the same time, a large proportion may be aborted, malformed or poorly colored because the plant may not have sufficient reserves.

Cucumbers are trellised in order to achieve better yields with better quality of fruits and to capture sunlight uniformly throughout the greenhouse.

MATURITY

Generally, first harvest from planting takes 44-55 days. Depending on diseases and pests control cucumbers can carry on producing for 14 weeks. At harvest the fruits must have reached a full diameter and while the seeds inside are still soft and small.



HARVESTING



Cucumbers are handpicked. When picking, the fruits should be clipped and or snapped near the stem and not pulled off or damage to the vine will occur. Cucumbers are harvested three times per week depending on the weather and growth stage of the plant.

Harvest at the coolest time of the day and avoid any heating of the harvested product.

The harvested fruits should be placed in clean harvesting containers or crates and taken to the pack house as soon as possible.

