



Columbia Nursery

Cucumber Planting & Care Guide (Zones 3–5)

Cucumbers are warm-season crops that thrive in USDA Zones 3–5 when given protection from frost and proper support. They are easy to grow and especially rewarding in the garden or in containers. Once you've tasted a fresh homegrown cucumber, store-bought ones just won't compare!

General Growing Guidelines

- Sunlight: Full sun (6–8 hours daily)
- Soil: Loose, fertile, well-drained soil rich in organic matter; pH 6.0–6.8
- Raised Beds: Cucumbers perform exceptionally well in raised beds where the soil warms faster and drains well
- Containers: Use wide, shallow containers to accommodate their shallow root systems
- Spacing:
 - Bush varieties: 12–18" apart in rows 3–4 ft apart
 - Vining varieties: 18–24" apart; provide vertical trellis support
- Support: Trellising improves airflow, saves space, and keeps fruit clean
- Pollination: Most cucumbers need pollinators; consider planting bee-friendly flowers nearby

Cucumber Types & Varieties

- Slicing cucumbers: Large, smooth-skinned; great fresh
- Pickling cucumbers: Small, crunchy; ideal for preservation
- Burpless/English: Thin-skinned, low bitterness; best for fresh eating
- Heirloom varieties: Try 'Lemon', 'Armenian', or 'Boston Pickling' for something unique
- Cold-hardy choices: 'Marketmore 76', 'Northern Pickling', 'Cool Breeze', 'Bush Champion'

Watering, Fertilizing & Mulching

- Watering: Keep soil evenly moist; inconsistent watering can cause bitterness in cucumbers. Water at soil level to avoid mildew.
- Fertilizer: Use balanced fertilizer (10-10-10) at planting; side-dress when vines start running
- Mulch: Use straw or compost to retain moisture, reduce weeds, and keep fruit dry and clean

Tips for Zones 3–5

- Start indoors using peat pots or soil blocks to avoid transplant shock
- Do not remove peat pots; plant directly in soil
- Use cloches, row covers, or cold frames in early weeks outdoors
- Choose bush varieties or grow vertically to save space
- Harvest often to keep vines producing
- Compost or remove overripe cucumbers to keep vines productive



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Cucumber Nutrition Highlights

- Low in calories
- High in vitamin C and potassium
- High water content makes them hydrating and refreshing

Planting Timeline (Zones 3–5)

Activity	Zone 3	Zone 4	Zone 5
Start seeds indoors	May 1–10	Apr 20–30	Apr 10–20
Direct sow outdoors	After June 10	After May 25	After May 10
Transplant outdoors	After June 10	After May 25	After May 10

Pest & Disease Prevention

Problem	Cause	Solution
Powdery mildew	Humidity, wet foliage	Water soil only; increase spacing/airflow
Cucumber beetles	Insects feed and spread disease	Hand-pick, vacuum with crevice tool, use organic sprays
Misshapen fruit	Poor pollination	Attract pollinators; hand-pollinate if needed
Yellowing leaves	Nutrient deficiency	Side-dress with compost or fertilizer