



Ventura Garden to Table Series – Peppers

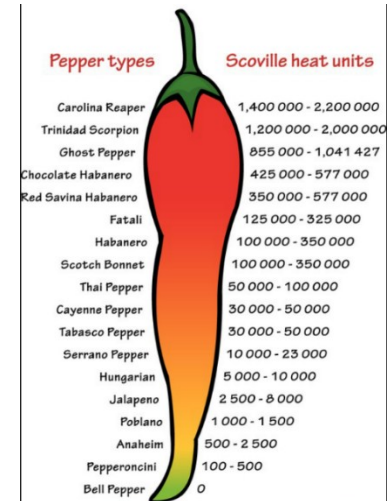
Peppers are in the *Solanaceae* (Nightshade) family - they need a lot of sun (minimum 6 hours) and are good for containers.

Scoville Scale – Rating the “Heat” in Peppers

- **The Scoville scale (SHU)** is based on the concentration of capsaicin, which gives peppers their heat.
- **Where is the heat?** Capsaicin is most present in the thin fleshy parts that connect the body of the pepper to the seeds.
- **Milk products neutralize the heat** – they contain proteins that bind to capsaicin. Also, Citrus fruits can help neutralize capsaicin.

Difference between Heirloom and Hybrid

- **Heirloom** – open-pollinated (seeds saved stay true to type), unique flavors and colors, and fruit can vary in size and shape - less uniform in yield and ripening time.
- **Hybrid** – cross-pollinated (seeds saved do not grow true to type), bred for disease resistance, uniformity in appearance, and maturity – not taste. Can have higher yields and greater vigor.



Pepper Types and Varieties to Consider

Overview – type is based on the SHU heat level, flavor profiles (sweet, fruity, smoky, earthy, or tangy/tart), and overall characteristics (shape, color, size).

- **Sweet and Bell Peppers** - characterized by their non-spicy flavor, thick flesh, and bright colors.
 - **Bell** – green is an unripe red, yellow and orange have thinner skin, black/purple slightly spicy.
 - **Pimento** – sweet mild heart-shaped smooth, and reddish appearance, with fruity and earthy flavor. Good for containers.
 - **Banana** – mild, tangy, and slightly sweet taste. They have a smooth, waxy skin and crisp, thick flesh. Often pickled.
 - **Cherry** – Mildly spicy, with a sweet and slightly tart undertone. Ideal for pickling.
 - **Cubanelle** - mild, sweet type of pepper, also known as Cuban peppers or Italian frying peppers.
- **Mild to Medium Hot Peppers** – detectable level of spiciness flavors from fruity to smoky.
 - **Poblano** – (Ancho are dried Poblano) – earthy, smoky, and fruity flavor.
 - **Anaheim** – mild, sweet, and slightly smoky flavor. Turns red when ripe.
 - **Hungarian Wax** –sweet and tangy, with a moderate level of heat. Turns red when mature.
 - **Jalapeño** – Chipotle is smoked, dried jalapeño) - vibrant, grassy flavor.
 - **Fresno** – similar shape to jalapeños, flavor is both fruity and slightly sweet.
 - **Serrano** – bright, biting flavor, hint of sweetness and earthiness, flesh is particularly thick.
- **Hot to Very Hot Peppers** – beyond the heat, Hot peppers also have complex flavor profiles, which can include fruity, citrusy, or smoky notes.
 - **Cayenne** – strong, pungent flavor and heat. Mostly red, but also yellow and purple.
 - **Tabasco** – distinct smoky flavor and are quite hot.



- **Thai Chilies** – fruity, sometimes with a hint of citrus – very spicy with lingering heat.
- **Chile de Árbol** – known for their fiery heat and smoky flavor.
- **Scotch Bonnet** - fiery heat and fruity flavor, a staple in Caribbean & West African cuisine.
- **Habanero** - fruity flavor, subtle smokiness, used in savory and sweet dishes.
- **Extremely Hot Peppers** – contain high concentrations of capsaicin.
 - **Ghost (Bhut Jolokia)** - Smoky, fruity, and slightly sweet, with intense heat.
 - **Carolina Reaper** - fruity and sweet aroma, with undertones of chocolate and cherry.

 - **Trinidad Scorpion** - fruity, slightly sweet, and citrus-like.

 - **7 Pot/7 Pod peppers** - sweet, fruity taste with a hint of celery, nutty undertone.
 - **Naga Viper Ghost** - Before the intense heat sets in, the Naga Viper exhibits fruity and sweet flavors. Rare seeds.
- **Regional Varieties** – exhibit a wide range of characteristics, including shape, size, color, and spiciness, often influenced by local climate, growing conditions, and culinary traditions.
 - **Guajillo (Mexico)** - are dried mirasol chilies and have a sweet, fruity, and slightly smoky flavor with mild to medium heat.
 - **Pasilla (Mexico)** – are dried Chilaca with smoky, earthy, and fruity flavor with notes of chocolate, raisins, and sometimes even a hint of tobacco, used in sauces, rubs, and stews.
 - **Aleppo peppers (Middle East)** – also known as Halaby peppers, sweet, fruity, and slightly tangy taste. Use dried/crushed.
 - **Peri-Peri/Piri-Piri (Africa and Portugal)** - known as African Bird's Eye chilies, very hot with subtle fruity flavor.
 - **Shishito (Japan)** - mild, slightly sweet, and smoky flavor – but 1 in 10 can have a spicy kick. Roasted, grilled, or eaten raw.
 - **Padrón (Spain)** – harvested young, have a mild and slightly sweet, with a grassy taste. Often sautéed in olive oil and served as tapas.

Basic Care: QR code will take you to the Soil to Sprouts slide deck on the Ventura County Master Gardener website



- Seeds or Transplant – Transplants produce earlier harvest, look for multiple plants per pot.
- Mulch the Soil Surface – Apply a 3-4-inch layer of organic mulch.
- Watering – water deep - overhead watering can lead to diseases.
- Support - trellis, stake, or cage.
- Fertilizer – Use a General Purpose (10-10-10) fertilizer. High nitrogen fertilizer will increase green growth – not fruit.
- Using Raised Beds or Containers? – use potting soil or blend of compost/topsoil/vermiculite.

Harvesting:

- Harvest when fruit is at full color for the variety.
- Allow hot peppers intended for drying to ripen fully on the plant.
- Fresh – best kept under refrigeration between 45° and 55° F with 90-95% humidity. Long-term storage – freeze.



UC Master Gardener
University of California
Agriculture & Natural Resources

- Do not store with apples or bananas, ethylene gas, which apples and bananas release can harm peppers.

Learn more about the Ventura County Master Gardener using this QR to visit the website.

To learn more about the
**UC Master Gardener
Program**
and see a list of
upcoming classes,
visit our website at
<http://ucanr.org/sites/VCMG>
or scan the QR code below

