

AVRDC - The World Vegetable Center

■ Introduction

Cucumber is a tasty vegetable that can be eaten raw or cooked. It also can be made into a juice for drinking. Cucumber contains many vitamins and minerals to help keep people healthy. Cucumber is a warm-season crop and needs plenty of water and sunlight to produce a good harvest.

■ AVRDC cucumbers in the Solomon Islands

AVRDC – The World Vegetable Center and local project partners are testing seven cucumber varieties to see how well they grow in the Solomon Islands. The varieties are named C-123, C-124, C-125, C-160, C-161, C-162, and C-163.



How to grow cucumber

■ Raise seedlings

Raise cucumber seedlings in nursery beds or seedling boxes filled with a mixture of garden soil and shredded coconut husk. With a stick or your finger, make shallow rows in the soil, 5 cm apart. Sow the seed in the rows, lightly cover with soil, and sprinkle with water.

■ Prepare planting beds

To grow a healthy crop, plant cucumber in raised beds made of well-drained soil. Raised beds make it easier to water plants in dry times, and help water drain away quickly during the rainy season. Make the beds about 1 m wide and 20 cm high. Leave a space of about 1.4 m between beds. About one week before planting, dig animal manure and compost, straw, leaves, or grass into the bed.

■ Transplant seedlings or plant seed

After about 14-20 days, transplant seedlings into the planting beds. Cucumber can grow flat on the ground, or climb up trellises. To grow flat, put two seedlings in a hill in the middle of the bed. Leave a 1.5 m space between hills. Water the seedlings immediately after transplanting.

To grow with trellises, make a row along each edge of the 1 m bed, and space single plants about 30 cm apart in the rows.

You can also plant cucumber seed directly into the ground. Use 3-4 seeds per hole if growing flat, or 2-3 seeds for trellises. After 10-15 days, thin seedlings: leave two plants if growing flat, or one plant if using trellises.

■ Crop care

Trellising: Build trellises with bamboo poles or other materials placed along the edges of the planting bed. Tie cucumber stems to the trellises as plants grow. Remove old or diseased leaves from the bottom of plants to keep the crop healthy.

Watering: Water plants as needed when weather is dry. Plants may not need as much water during the rainy season.



■ When to harvest

Cucumber can be harvested 7-10 days after flowering. Fruit sizes vary, depending on the variety. Pick fruits regularly so the plants will continue to produce new fruit. Do not wait until the fruit turns yellow, which is a sign that it is too old.

■ Pests and diseases

Red pumpkin beetles, aphids, fruit flies, and whiteflies can attack cucumber plants and fruit. Collect and bury any damaged plants or fruit to prevent pests from spreading to other plants. Powdery mildew and downy mildew are common diseases that affect cucumber. These diseases are difficult to control because they are carried by the wind. It is best to grow cucumber varieties that are resistant to mildew.

■ Produce your own seed for future planting

If you want to save cucumber seed, it is best to grow only one variety at a time in your garden.

Cucumbers have two different flowers, male and female. Male flowers open first, and then drop off. Female flowers form the fruit.

There are two types of cucumber: Those that produce male and female flowers, and those that produce mostly female flowers. You can save seed from varieties that produce male and female flowers: Mark nice looking fruits on healthy strong plants in the field and let them ripen until they are large and yellow. Leave on the vine until the vines die. Pick the fruit, and leave it in a place out of direct sunlight for 5 to

7 days. When the fruit is soft, remove the seeds and juice and put in a jar or bucket. Leave to ferment for 1-2 days. Clean the seeds with water, and dry them in a shady, airy place until the seed snaps when bent in half. Put dried seed in a paper envelope or cloth bag, and store in sealed bottles or tin cans with some charcoal at the bottom. Keep the bottle/can in a cool dry place.

For more information

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How to Grow Cucumber

A healthy vegetable
with many uses

