

# Gathering chilli pepper seeds to grow



Try cultivating chilli plants from seeds you have harvested yourself

Chillies are a favourite to grow for those who enjoy spicy foods, as their unmistakable heat adds an extra element to any dish. So when you have a mature pepper, why not take the seeds from the fruit so that you can plant them and grow more? There are a huge selection of varieties to choose from, as well as colours and shapes. You can follow this guide to learn how to harvest the seeds then ready them for growing.



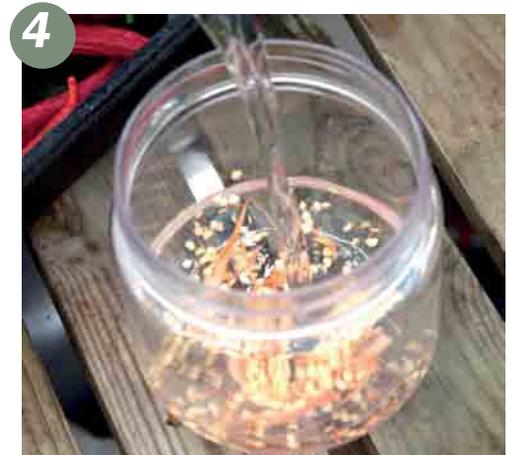
1 Choose the chilli you will be taking seeds from and if you are picking one from a plant detach it using a sharp knife. The pepper chosen must be fully ripened and healthy, so that the seeds within are viable.



2 Carefully slice the peppers open with a knife to reveal the seeds inside. Wear gloves for this as the capsaicin oil is in large concentrations here and may burn your skin – be careful not to touch your eyes!



3 Delicately remove the seeds from the chilli pods. You can then look through them to choose the best ones, and put aside any which are not of the best quality, either those which are discoloured or have been damaged.



4 Place your chosen seeds in a small jar filled with water and leave them to soak for 24 hours. This process helps to weaken the shell and therefore aids germination. Chamomile tea is also sometimes used.



Once you have soaked them for a sufficient amount of time to soften the casing, you should pour the contents of the jar into a sieve – this then just leaves you with the seeds for you to plant.



Purchase a good quality compost to grow your seedlings in. It should be finely milled so there is no large debris or stones present, which could negatively affect the development of your plants.



Fill a suitable small seed tray about three quarters full with compost, and be sure to level the surface of the earth so that there is an equal amount of soil spread out across the entire tray.



Take your chilli seeds and put them individually in rows in your container. Place them at a distance of about 5cm apart. You can then repeat the lines until your tray is completely full.



The seeds should then be covered lightly with a small film of the fine compost. It is important to be careful here and not to use too much, or if you prefer they could be topped with a thin layer of vermiculite.



Place the seed tray in water and remember to label it to prevent confusion. A propagator can be used to aid germination, and then the seedlings can be placed on a warm windowsill or greenhouse shelf.

## GYO'S TOP TIPS



## WHAT TO DO NEXT

**Chilli seedlings** should be transplanted from the seed tray into 10cm pots when they are about 2.5cm tall. Fill the container with compost, although not to the brim, and then you can transfer the seedling to the pot by using a small tool, but be careful with the leaves and stem of the plant while doing this. Delicately cover the roots of the seedlings with compost, and be sure to give them all a good water. Chilli plants grow best in warm conditions with plenty of light, so indoors in a sunny spot is ideal, but they can be placed in a heated greenhouse. As they grow they may need to be transferred to larger pots as well as supported with a stake.

**Pests** can be a problem when growing chilli plants in a greenhouse as aphids and whitefly could be attracted, which both feed off the sap of the plant and then produce honeydew. This will increase the likelihood of dark sooty moulds which would negatively affect your edibles. To counteract these pests you can use biological control, such as ladybirds, but if there are only a few present you can deal with the issue by individually finding and removing them or using sticky traps for whitefly.

