

TOP 10 DO'S AND DON'TS FOR CHILI PEPPER GARDENERS (Especially First Timers in the Area)



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These pointers for gardeners wishing to grow chile peppers for the first time come from years of experience growing many different varieties. You will have a better chance of being a happy chile pepper gardener if you heed these "Don'ts" and practice these "Do's." Purchase plants at a nursery or start seed at home prior to transplanting to a spring/summer garden.

#10. Don't plant in existing soil. Most Greater Houston/Galveston Area soils are either hard black "gumbo" clay or sandy soil. Clay drains too slowly; sandy too quickly. Do amend existing soil with compost and other recommended soil additives. Guidelines can be found in the "Easy Garden Reference Document, Soil Preparation."

[\[http://aggie-horticulture.tamu.edu/organic/files/2011/03/E-284_soil_preparation.pdf\]](http://aggie-horticulture.tamu.edu/organic/files/2011/03/E-284_soil_preparation.pdf).

Slope existing soil for better drainage. A raised bed garden is a good alternative for first time gardeners. Another alternative for those with limited space: containers (5-gal. minimum) with potting soil.



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- #9. Don't plant in shade. Do plant in at least 8 hours of sunshine per day.
- #8. Don't plant peppers in the same garden space year after year. Do rotate with different vegetable plantings like broccoli, cabbage, peas, beans, and sweet corn.
- #7. Don't plant in ground until warm enough - after mid March for most of us. Ideal air temperature: 65° to 85° F. Do provide cold protection when temps drop into the 40s or below.
- #6. Don't plant too close together. Do place plants at least 24" apart in rows at least 36" apart. Maintain a clear 12-18" area from lower leaves to soil. Better spacing promotes a healthier garden.
- #5. Don't let weeds take over. Do keep garden area clear of weeds and fallen fruit/foliage to minimize disease and insect issues.
- #4. Don't pick color hybrid peppers (red, orange, yellow) too soon (still green). Do be patient. Let peppers mature to advertised colors. The difference in flavor, nutrition, and beauty is well worth the wait.
- #3. Don't worry about sweet/bell peppers planted next to hot peppers becoming hot. It does not happen in the same generation. Do keep in mind cross pollination could affect subsequent plantings if you save seed.
- #2. Don't worry about eating ornamental peppers grown from seed. Do be aware pepper plants from a nursery may have been treated with an unwanted pesticide.
- #1. Don't be careless with hot peppers! Do use rubber gloves when handling. Don't use water to "put out the fire" of a hot pepper if you have over indulged. This still seems to be the #1 mistake of the naïve.

Do use cold milk instead. Bread helps but not as well as milk.