

# Description

Ornamental pepper care is easy, and you can expect fruit from mid spring until fall. Bushy, glossy green foliage and colorful fruit that stand in upright clusters at the end of the stems combine to create an outstanding ornamental plant. The fruit comes in shades of red, purple, yellow, orange, black or white, and the peppers change colors as they ripen, so you may see several different colors on the same plant. Use them as bedding plants in the garden or plant them in pots so you can enjoy them on sunny decks and patios.

## Growing Ornamental Pepper From Seeds

Start ornamental peppers indoors in small individual pots filled with potting soil or seed starting medium. Bury the seeds  $\frac{1}{4}$  to  $\frac{1}{2}$  inch deep. Allow one to two weeks for the seeds to germinate and another six to eight weeks for the seedlings to reach transplanting size. Begin feeding the seedlings with half-strength liquid fertilizer at two week intervals about three weeks after they germinate if you have planted them in seed starting medium. The medium manages water well and helps prevent fungal diseases such as damping off, but it doesn't contain nutrients the plant needs to grow. Good potting soils contain enough nutrients to support the plant until transplanting time. Transplant the seedlings into a sunny part of the garden with organically rich, well-drained soil. Space the plants according to the directions on the seed packet or plant tag, or about 12 inches apart. If you prefer to grow your ornamental peppers in containers, use 6- to 8-inch pots filled with good quality general purpose potting soil. Ornamental Pepper Care Ornamental peppers require little care. Water the plants when there is less than an inch of rain in a week. Side dress with general purpose fertilizer when the first fruits appear and again about six weeks later. Growing ornamental peppers in containers lets you enjoy the colorful fruit up close. Keep the potting soil evenly moist and use a liquid houseplant fertilizer or a slow-release houseplant fertilizer as directed.