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Sustainable Gardening for School and Home Gardens: Cucumber

Johannah Frelief

Denyse Cummins

Carl Motsenbocker

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SUSTAINABLE GARDENING

FOR SCHOOL AND HOME GARDENS

Cucumber

Cucumis sativus



QUICK FACTS

- Plant family: *Cucurbitaceae* (Gourd)
- Season: Warm
- Life cycle: Annual
- Seed to first harvest: 45-65 days



Create a Sustainable Garden by improving soil health, relying on locally available materials and resources, and practicing environmentally sound horticultural practices

History

Cucumbers are members of the *Cucurbitaceae* family, also known as the cucurbits or gourd family (see Figure 1). The group includes crops such as winter and summer squash, watermelon, cantaloupe, pumpkins and gourds.

It is believed that cucumbers originated in India over 3,000 years ago and then spread to China, Greece, Italy and North Africa (see Figure 2). By the 9th century, cucumbers were grown in France, likely transported by the Romans. They were not documented in England until the 14th century. Cucumbers were then transported to the Americas during colonization, led by Columbus around the mid-1500s, and were grown in early Virginia and Massachusetts settlements. By 1650, cucumbers were grown in South America.

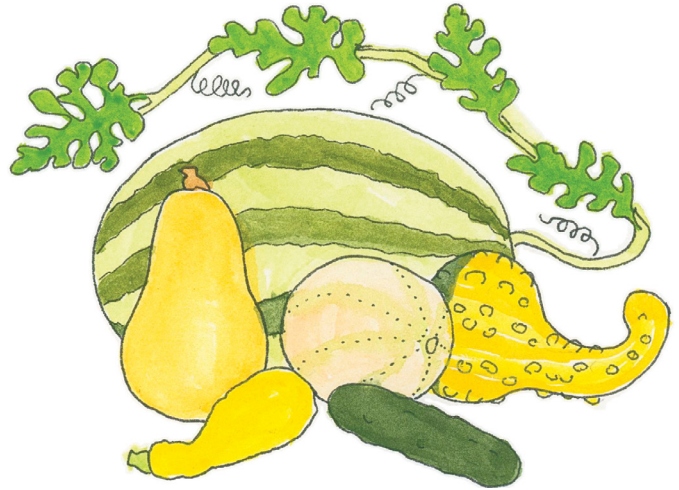


Figure 1. Cucumbers belong to the *Cucurbitaceae* plant family, along with cantaloupe, watermelon, summer and winter squash, gourds and many more.

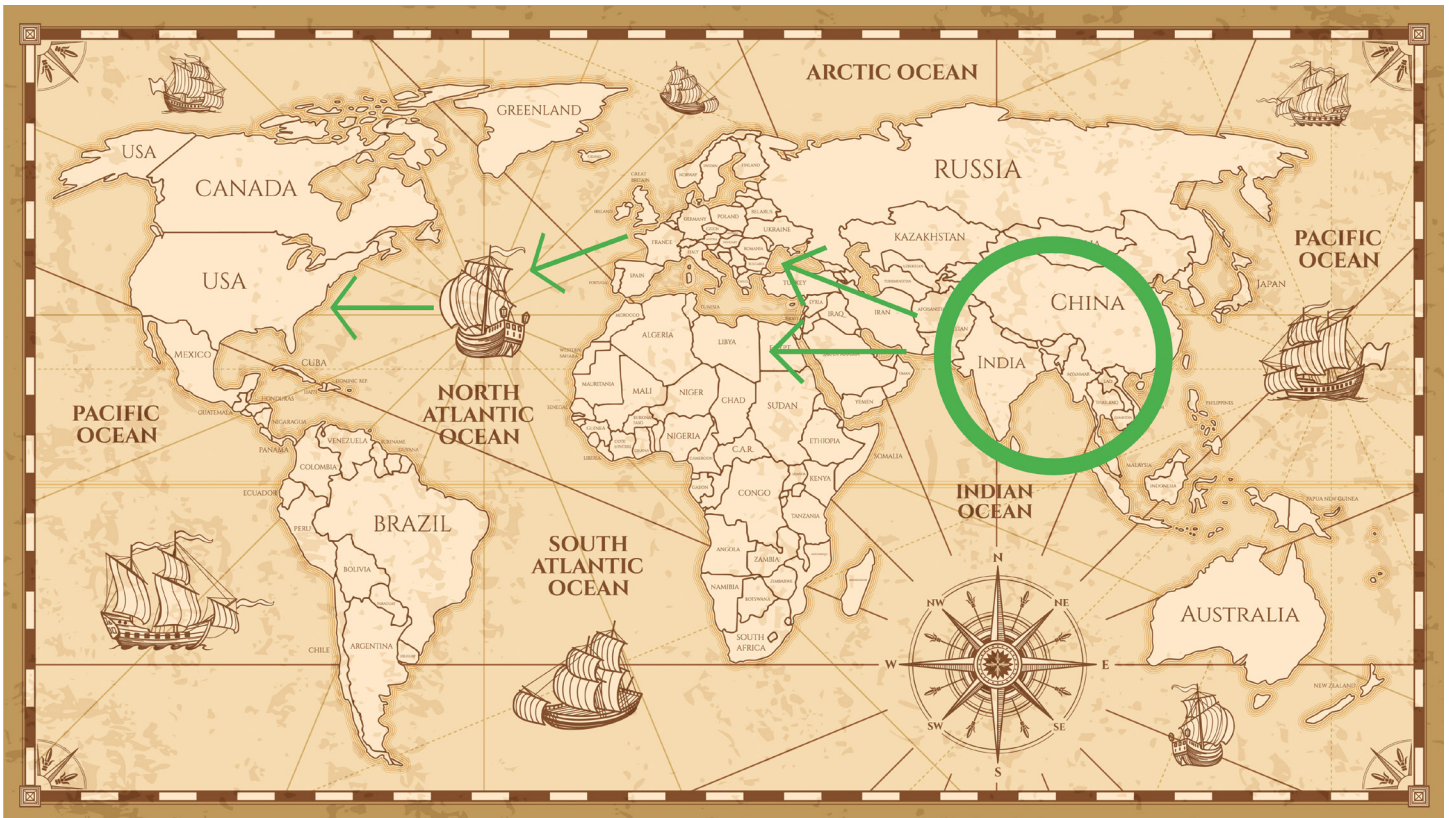


Figure 2. Map showing the origin and migration of cucumbers to the U.S.

Cucumbers are annuals (with a life cycle of one year) that require a long, warm growing season. Tolerant

of hot weather, many cucumber varieties are highly suitable to the Louisiana climate.

Growing

Varieties

Cucumbers can be divided into two main types: (1) slicer or fresh market and (2) pickling (see Figure 3). Slicer cucumbers are generally long and dark green with a smooth, thick skin. Pickling cucumbers are lighter green, short and blocky, with a warty or bumpy tender skin. They are an ideal size and shape for pickling but can also be consumed fresh. Many slicer and pickling types are particularly well suited for the hot and humid Louisiana climate, such as Ashley, General Lee and Tasty Green.

Other specialty cucumber types include English (also known as greenhouse or long Dutch), which produce very long, slender and seedless fruit and miniature, which produce smaller fruit (see Figure 3). Cucumber plants have a vining growth habit that is either indeterminate (continuous growth until plant death), determinate (a set, “determined” growth), or compact (shorter growth).

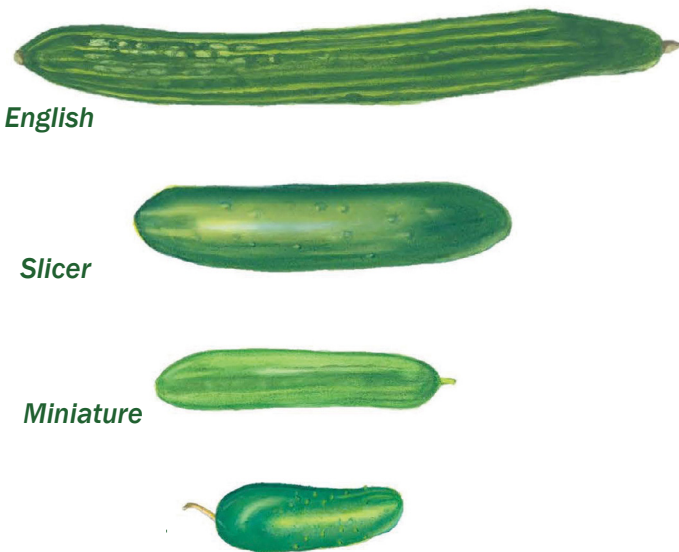


Figure 3. The main types of cucumbers are slicer and pickling. Other specialty cucumber types include English and miniature.

Cucumbers have either open-pollinated (including heirloom) or hybrid varieties. Some cucumber varieties are heirlooms, like Suvo Long and Boston Pickling, meaning these seeds have been saved for at least 50 years, can be saved each season and replanted, and are open-pollinated. Most cucumber varieties (except English/greenhouse) are insect-pollinated, so if saving seed, different varieties must be separated by a distance of 800 feet to 1/2 mile

to avoid easy cross-pollination. Generally, it is not recommended to save seed for future planting with hybrid varieties, as they are usually not expressed properly in the next generation.

Cucumber plants are mostly monoecious, which produce both male and female flowers on the same plant, but gynoecious types, which only produce female flowers, also exist. Both male and female flowers are open for a single day. Male flowers open about 10 days before female flowers and outnumber female flowers. Gynoecious types are often preferred because only female flowers produce fruit, generally mature earlier with a higher yield and have a more concentrated fruit set. To produce pollen in the garden, one pollinizer plant must be planted for every 10 gynoecious plants; this seed is included in the seed packet along with the gynoecious variety.

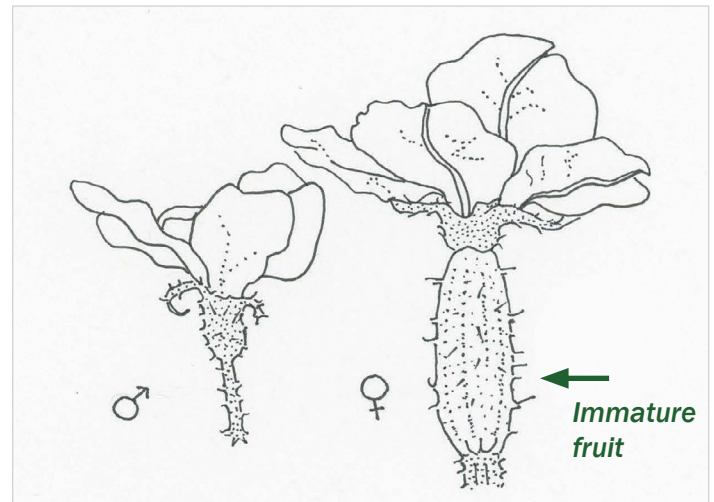


Figure 4. Male (left) and female (right) cucumber flower, with an immature fruit developing below the female flower.

Some cucumber varieties are also parthenocarpic, which bear fruits without pollination, resulting in seedless cucumbers. Seedless cucumbers are also referred to as “burpless,” meaning they bear fruits with thin, nonbitter skin. Parthenocarpic cucumbers have been traditionally grown in greenhouse and high tunnel conditions (lower light, higher humidity and temperature) to prevent bees from cross-pollinating flowers and causing seed development and have better disease resistance than other types. Nearly all English cucumber varieties are seedless and thin skinned.

It is recommended to select disease resistant varieties whenever possible. See the recommended cucumber varieties for Louisiana in Table 1.

Table 1. Recommended Cucumber Varieties for Louisiana

Variety Name	Description	Days to Harvest*	Fruit Size	Resistance & Tolerance
Slicer/Fresh Market				
Ashley	Dark green fruit; grows well in hot, humid climates; productive heirloom variety	58 days	7-8" long	Angular leaf spot, downy mildew, powdery mildew
Cortez (Daytona)	Dark green fruit; high quality; gynoecious; hybrid	60 days	2"x 9" long	Angular leaf spot, anthracnose, downy mildew, powdery mildew, scab, cucumber mosaic, watermelon mosaic, zucchini yellow mosaic, and papaya ringspot viruses
Dasher II	Dark green fruit; early variety; very productive; high quality; gynoecious; hybrid	58 days	8-10" long	Angular leaf spot, anthracnose, cucumber mosaic virus, downy mildew, powdery mildew, scab
Diva	Glossy, dark green fruit; burpless (thin, nonbitter skin); flavorful, tender and crisp; very productive; seedless; gynoecious; open-pollinated	58 days	5-7" long	Angular leaf spot, cucumber vein yellowing virus, downy mildew, powdery mildew, scab
Fanfare	Dark green, slender fruit; compact semibush vines; flavorful; very productive; monoecious; hybrid	52-63 days	8-9" long	Anthracnose, downy mildew, powdery mildew
General Lee	Dark green fruit with white spines; uniform; attractive; very productive; bred for the South; adaptable; gynoecious; hybrid	52-66 days	8-8.5" long	Cucumber mosaic virus, downy mildew, powdery mildew, scab
Marketmore 76	Slender, dark green fruit; mild taste; vigorous; very productive; heat tolerant; open-pollinated	57-65 days	8-9" long	Anthracnose, angular leaf spot, cucumber mosaic virus, downy mildew, powdery mildew, scab
Olympian	Straight, dark green fruit; uniform; very flavorful and productive; gynoecious; hybrid	52 days	8-9" long	Anthracnose, downy mildew, powdery mildew
Poinsett 76	Dark green fruit; grows well in coastal areas; open-pollinated	56 days	7-8" long	Angular leaf spot, anthracnose, downy mildew, powdery mildew, spider mites
Rockingham	Smooth, dark green fruit; productive, vigorous hybrid	58 days	8.5" long	Angular leaf spot, anthracnose, cucumber mosaic virus, powdery mildew, scab
Salad Bush	Glossy, dark green fruit; small and compact bush type; smooth skin; tender and crisp; hybrid	57 days	8" long	Cucumber mosaic virus, powdery mildew, scab
Slice More	Dark green, straight fruit: smooth skin, burpless (thin, nonbitter skin), very productive; uniform, adaptable hybrid	62 days	8" long	Anthracnose, cucumber mosaic virus, downy mildew, powdery mildew, scab
Spacemaster	Green fruit; compact bush type; gynoecious; heirloom variety	60 days	7.5" long	Cucumber mosaic virus, scab

Variety Name	Description	Days to Harvest*	Fruit Size	Resistance & Tolerance
Speedway	Dark green, straight fruit; smooth skin; early variety; productive; high quality; gynoecious; hybrid	56 days	8" long	Angular leaf spot, anthracnose, cucumber mosaic virus, downy mildew, powdery mildew, scab
Stonewall	Dark green, straight fruit; productive; high quality; stores well; early variety; hybrid	53 days	8-9" long	Angular leaf spot, anthracnose, cucumber mosaic virus, downy mildew, powdery mildew, scab
Straight Eight	Dark green fruit; uniform; productive; dependable; flavorful heirloom variety	57-63 days	8" long	Angular leaf spot, anthracnose, powdery mildew, spider mites
Suyo Long	Long, dark green fruit; burpless (thin, nonbitter skin); tends to curl; heat tolerant, vigorous and hardy; productive, flavorful, Asian heirloom variety	60-65 days	15-18" long	Powdery mildew
Sweet Slice	Long, dark green fruit; burpless (thin, nonbitter skin); crisp and sweet; high quality, productive hybrid	62-63 days	9-12" long	Anthracnose, downy mildew, powdery mildew
Sweet Success	Long, seedless, dark green fruit; high quality; tender skin; burpless (thin, nonbitter skin); gynoecious; hybrid	58 days	12" long	Angular leaf spot, cucumber and watermelon mosaic viruses, scab, target leaf spot
Tasty Green	Long and slender Asian variety; dark green fruit; burpless (thin, nonbitter skin); very productive, early variety; high quality, flavorful and crisp; grows well in hot, humid climates; hybrid	55-60 days	9" long	Downy mildew, powdery mildew
Thunder	Dark green, extra-long fruit; smooth skin; early variety; productive; gynoecious; hybrid	55 days	18-20" long	Angular leaf spot, anthracnose, cucumber mosaic virus, downy mildew, powdery mildew, scab, zucchini yellow mosaic virus
Pickling				
Boston Pickling	Medium green fruit; blunt shape; mild flavor; crisp, productive heirloom variety	50-58 days	5-6" long	Cucumber mosaic virus
Calypso	Blocky, light green fruit; early variety; uniform and very productive; high quality; gynoecious; hybrid	52-53 days	4" long	Angular leaf spot, anthracnose, cucumber mosaic virus, downy mildew, powdery mildew, scab
Carolina	Dark green fruit; high quality; productive; early variety; hybrid	49-51 days	3" long	Angular leaf spot, anthracnose, cucumber mosaic virus, downy mildew, powdery mildew, scab
Eureka	Dark green fruit; early variety; very productive; flavorful and crisp; hybrid	56-57 days	5-7" long	Angular leaf spot, anthracnose, downy mildew, powdery mildew, scab; cucumber mosaic, watermelon mosaic, zucchini yellow mosaic, and papaya ringspot viruses

Variety Name	Description	Days to Harvest*	Fruit Size	Resistance & Tolerance
Fancipak	Medium dark green, blocky fruit; very flavorful and crisp; productive; dense foliage; gynoecious; hybrid	57 days	4" long	Angular leaf spot, anthracnose, cucumber and zucchini yellow mosaic viruses, downy mildew, powdery mildew
Homemade Pickles	Medium green fruit with small white spines; firm and crisp; flavorful and vigorous; very productive; open-pollinated	55-60 days	5-6" long	Angular leaf spot, anthracnose, cucumber mosaic virus, downy mildew, powdery mildew
Jackson	Medium dark green, blocky fruit with white spines; hybrid	49 days	3-5" long	Angular leaf spot, anthracnose, cucumber mosaic virus, powdery mildew, scab
National Pickling	Medium green, striped fruit; blunt and slightly tapered ends; very productive; heirloom variety	52-54 days	5-6" long	Cucumber mosaic virus, scab
Greenhouse (English/Long Dutch)				
Bologna	Long, straight, dark green fruit; vigorous; very heat tolerant; productive hybrid		13-15.5" long	Powdery mildew, scab, target spot
Camaro	Long, ribbed, green fruit; gynoecious; productive; better suited as fall crop; low light tolerant; hybrid		13-15.5" long	Powdery mildew
Miniature				
Delta Star	Dark green, slightly ribbed fruit; vigorous; flavorful; stores well; hybrid		6-7" long	Cucumber mosaic virus, cucumber vein yellowing virus, powdery mildew, scab, target spot
Jawell	Dark green, ribbed fruit; uniform; early variety; gynoecious; productive; stores well; hybrid		6-7" long	Cucumber mosaic virus, powdery mildew
Katrina	Seedless, green fruit; thin skin; early variety; heat tolerant; very productive; uniform; gynoecious; hybrid	49 days	5.5-6.5" long	Cucumber mosaic virus, cucumber vein yellowing virus, powdery mildew, scab

Notes: *From direct seed to harvest

Table varieties selected from recommendations from LSU AgCenter, UF Extension, Texas A&M Extension and Southeastern U.S. Vegetable Crop Handbook.

Variety descriptions compiled from High Mowing Organic Seeds, Johnny's Selected Seeds, Reimer Seeds, Southern Exposure Seed Exchange, Sow True Seed, All-America Selections, Jordan Seeds and Sakata Seed America.

Other recommended cucumber varieties for Louisiana include:

Slicer/Fresh Market: Indy, Intimidator, Talladega

English/Long Dutch: Cumlaude, Discover, Verdon

Miniature: Manar, Picowell

When and How to Plant

Cucumbers should be direct-seeded outside during the recommended planting dates (see Table 2). As warm-season crops, plant cucumber seeds outside when the soil temperature has warmed to 60-95 degrees Fahrenheit (optimum of 85-95 F; minimum of 60 F). If planting early when soil temperatures reach 60 F, be sure there is no danger of frost and consider using row cover and plastic mulch for protection and to increase soil temperature. The use of a soil temperature map can help guide planting decisions.

Refer to the Cucumber Planting Guide (Table 2) for the recommended spacing when direct-seeding outside. Sow about 3 seeds 1/2-3/4-inch deep, cover with soil and water in. Seeds should emerge in about 5-10 days, then thin to one plant at the recommended spacing distance. After germination, cucumber plants prefer warm days (80-90 F) and warm nights (60-70 F) with low humidity. Temperatures above 95 F or below 60 F may stunt plants and reduce yield.

Table 2. Cucumber Planting Guide

Cucumber Type	Plant Outside Dates	Seed Spacing (inches)	Row Spacing (inches)	Days to Harvest*
Slicer	North LA: March 15-May 15, July 15-Aug. South LA: March-May 15, Aug.-Sept. 15	9-12	36-72	45-65 days
Pickling	North LA: April-May 15, July 15-Aug. South LA: March 15-May 15, Aug.-Sept. 15	6-8	36-48	45-65 days

*Seed to first harvest

Note: Table adapted from LSU AgCenter and UF Extension Planting Guides, and Southeastern U.S. Vegetable Production Handbook.

Cucumbers can also be started inside and transplanted outside. Due to rapid growth it is recommended to start seeds only 3-4 weeks before planting outside, otherwise seedlings may become stunted and too large for successful transplanting, and the transplants may have already started flowering.

Where to Plant

Cucumbers are a warm-season crop that prefers well-drained, aerated soil and full sun (at least 6 hours per day). Cucumber plants prefer a soil pH between 5.5 and 7.0. It is recommended to plant in box beds or in traditional raised garden rows that are 4-6 inches tall to ensure good drainage and prevent disease. In all types of gardens, it is recommended to add a 2-3-inch layer of compost, peat moss, rotted hay or other organic matter and mix into the soil to optimize plant health. This is especially important for cucumbers as they thrive in soil high in organic matter. If cucumber plant leaves turn yellow or bronze, the soil may be deficient in nitrogen or potassium, respectively.

Black plastic mulch — or a plastic fabric/film — is recommended to increase soil temperature, improve yield, fruit size and quality while controlling weeds and conserving moisture. Mulching will also help to deter common cucumber insect pests like cucumber beetles. Organic mulches like straw or hay can also be used.

Floating fabric row covers are also recommended for this crop to improve growth and deter pests during the seedling stage. Row covers should be removed when plants enter the flowering stage of growth to optimize pollination.

Each season rotate plant families — avoid planting crops from the same plant family in the same area of the garden — to reduce disease and insect pests. A longer crop rotation of three to four years is recommended for *Cucurbitaceae* crops to reduce insect pest pressure and risk of disease.

Plant Care

It is recommended to follow [sustainable gardening](#) principles.

Watering: Deep, uniform watering is important for cucumber plants as their root system can be 3-4 feet deep. Avoid wetting the plant foliage. When cucumber plants experience drought, the fruit may become bitter and underdeveloped. Adequate watering is essential during germination, vining and fruit development. In general, vegetable crops require 1 inch of rain or supplemental irrigation a week.

Fertilization: Cucumbers require sufficient but not excessive nitrogen. If over-fertilized or grown following beans or other legumes, plants may produce excessive

vines and little fruit. As a long-season crop, it is important to continue to side-dress cucumbers to keep plants productive.

Organic fertilizers, such as compost, fish emulsion, composted poultry litter or manure, worm castings, and blood or bone meal, originate from living organisms. They are far safer and more environmentally sustainable than traditional synthetic fertilizers. They naturally release nutrients more slowly and over a longer period of time. When applying organic fertilizer, it is important to use in unison with compost, cover crops and crop rotation, which all work together to build soil health. Learn how to convert inorganic fertilizer recommendations to organic fertilizers [here](#).

Alternatively, a synthetic fertilizer may be used at the rate of about 1 pound (2 cups) of 13-13-13 for every 25 feet of row or 75 square feet. Broadcast or sprinkle evenly over the soil before planting and then mix in about 3-6 inches deep using a rake. Supplemental side-dressing, or reapplication of synthetic or organic fertilizer, is recommended when plants start vining. Side-dressing is the addition of a small amount of fertilizer to the soil around already established plants when the plant begins to fruit or vine, primarily to provide nitrogen. If using synthetic fertilizer, sprinkle 2 tablespoons around each plant, keeping it about 6 inches away from the plant stem, and water into the soil. Additional side-dressing may be applied every 3-4 weeks. Fish emulsion can provide a quick-release form of nitrogen for side-dressing with an organic fertilizer.

Support: For all cucumber types it is recommended to use stakes, mesh trellises or a wire fence at least 6-8 feet tall for support. This will improve fruit quality, optimize yield, keep fruit clean and increase ease of harvest. It is recommended to use a nylon netting mesh trellis that is attached to T-posts for easiest setup, portability and durability. This support method allows more air circulation than stakes and is more portable than a wire fence. Here is a helpful [video](#) explaining trellising using nylon netting and plastic C-clips to train a vertical growth habit. As plants grow, they will self-attach with tendrils (see Figure 5).

Bitterness: Crops in the *Cucurbitaceae* family produce cucurbitacin, a chemical that causes bitter-tasting fruits. The likelihood of bitter fruit increases with close, intensive planting of crops from this family but can also be triggered by high and/or fluctuating temperatures, low and/or irregular irrigation, and low soil fertility and/



Figure 5. *Cucumber plants with tendrils self-attaching to a nylon trellis.*

or pH.

Weeds: Plastic or organic mulch will control most of the weeds; hand pull weeds close to the plant, especially those growing in the planting holes.

Insect pests and diseases: Aphids are a common insect pest for cucumber plants and can transmit harmful viruses like cucumber, watermelon and zucchini yellow mosaic viruses and the papaya ringspot virus. Other common cucumber insect pests include cucumber beetles, spider mites and whiteflies. Regular monitoring can help identify symptoms of these insect pests and allow for early treatment and management. Cucumbers are also susceptible to viruses (e.g., cucumber, watermelon and zucchini yellow mosaic viruses and the papaya ringspot virus) and fungal diseases (e.g., anthracnose, downy and powdery mildew). Some varieties are resistant to specific diseases, and these should be selected and planted. Generally recommended tools for prevention are using reflective mulches, avoiding overhead irrigation, improving air circulation by trellising and using adequate plant spacing, and crop rotation (at least three to four years). See Table 3 to aid in diagnosis and management of some common cucumber insect pests and diseases.

Table 3. Organic and Natural Management for Common Cucumber Pests and Diseases

Symptoms	Diagnosis	Organic and Natural Management
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Warm, humid conditions • Small yellow-green, water-soaked spots on lower and older leaves • Older spots become brownish-black with yellow halo • Defoliation, sunscald • Blossom drop and yield loss 	Alternaria leaf spot	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Plant resistant varieties • Crop rotation • Maintain good growing conditions; reduce plant stress • Avoid overhead irrigation • Avoid working in wet fields • Copper-based fungicide sprays
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Warm, humid temperatures with frequent rainfall • Circular yellow-tan lesions on leaves that turn black • Elongated lesions on stems and petioles • Scorched-looking plants • Sunken, circular, water-soaked lesions on large fruit • Pink/salmon-colored spores in center of lesions on fruit • Malformed young fruit 	Anthracnose	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Crop rotation (3 years) • Plant resistant varieties • Avoid working in fields when plants are wet • Mulch; avoid overhead irrigation • Regular harvest; remove diseased fruit • Organic/natural fungicides
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Curled and yellowed leaves • Stunted crops • Sticky honeydew on leaves 	Aphids	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Timely planting and harvest • Reduce water stress • Weed control • Use water jet to dislodge • Reflective mulches; insect barrier fabric • Beneficial insects: lady bugs, lacewings, predatory stink bugs, syrphid flies • Insecticidal soap, neem oil, pyrethrin, Azera
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Misshapen fruits with brown lesion on blossom end • Premature fruit ripening • Dry weather; calcium deficiency • Drought stress; root damage • Over-irrigation, high humidity 	Blossom-end rot	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Plant resistant varieties • Keep soil pH at 6.0-6.5 • Fertilize (abundant calcium) and mulch • Adequate, consistent irrigation, avoiding wet/dry extremes • If soil is calcium deficient, drench soil around plants with calcium solution; remove fruit
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Transmitted by aphids • Yellow-green mottling or mosaic pattern on leaves • Distorted, deformed leaves • Stunted young leaves and plants. • Low yield; small, deformed, discolored fruit 	Cucumber, watermelon, and zucchini yellow mosaic viruses	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Plant resistant varieties • Control aphids and weeds • Remove and destroy infected plants and crop debris

Symptoms	Diagnosis	Organic and Natural Management
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cream-colored larvae, ⅜-inch long • Adult yellow beetles with black spots/stripes; ¼-inch long • Feeding damage on foliage, especially young leaves • Often causes bacterial wilt (vines suddenly wilt and die) • Stunted plants or death 	Cucumber beetle	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Crop rotation • Trap cropping (Hubbard squash) • Dip/spray seedlings with kaolin clay (can also combine with insecticidal soap or neem oil) • Floating row cover • Beneficial insects: parasitic wasp • Remove crop debris • Insecticides: pyrethrin, neem, sabadilla
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Damp, cool conditions • Small, yellowing, angular patches on leaves • Damping off 	Downy mildew	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Crop rotation (2+ years) • Plant resistant varieties • Reduce leaf moisture by improving air circulation, morning irrigation • Remove crop debris and weeds • Organic/natural fungicides
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Damping off in seedlings • Brown streaks inside root and lower stem when split lengthwise • Bacterial wilt is transmitted by the cucumber beetle • Plants wilt and die 	Fusarium wilt	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Plant resistant varieties • Long crop rotation • Weed control • Control cucumber beetles • Remove infected crop debris
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Small, round white spots with fungal growth on older leaves with dark mottled underside • Leaves covered with talc-like powder; leaf yellows and die • Hot, dry conditions 	Powdery mildew	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Plant resistant varieties • Good soil health and air circulation • Increase plant spacing • Eliminate weeds • Organic/natural fungicides containing sulfur
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Spiderlike pests, very small • Feeding on underside of leaves causes yellow spots and tiny webs • Begins around garden perimeter, grassy areas 	Spider mites	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Timely plant and harvest • Adequate irrigation • Beneficial insects: predatory mites • Restrict mowing grass close to crops • Paraffinic and neem oil, sulfur dust, Chenopodium terpene extract, Soluble Silica, Aramite, Biomite
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Bugs are grayish-brown, ½ to ¾-inch long; flat back • Bugs found on underside of leaves, under plastic mulch or debris • Crop damage, wilt, death 	Squash bug	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Plant resistant varieties • Row cover • Trap cropping (Hubbard squash) • Handpick and destroy bugs • Remove or till crop debris • Beneficial insects: tachinid fly • Insecticides: pyrethrin or sabadilla
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • White larvae, 1-inch long, outside and inside stem near the soil • Vine wilt and death 	Squash vine borer	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mix charcoal into soil just before planting • Apply rotenone around plant base • Floating row cover • Pheromone-baited sticky traps • Slice open stems of infested plants and destroy vine borers

Note: Adapted from LSU AgCenter, Texas A&M AgriLife Extension, UMass Extension, Alabama A&M and Auburn Universities Extension, and University of Minnesota Extension. The Louisiana Pesticide Law regulates the use of pesticides in schools to protect children and staff from harmful exposure to chemicals and is enforced by LDAF. The recommended alternative to routine pesticide use is integrated pest management (IPM), which combines pest control, disease management techniques and organic/natural alternatives, many of which are found in this table.

Harvest and Storage

Cucumbers are harvested when fruit reaches harvest size, or every 2-3 days for 3-4 weeks. It is recommended to use shears to clip the stems when harvesting cucumbers (avoid twisting/breaking the stems). Consistent harvesting and removal of overmatured fruit (indicated by yellowing skin) is essential for optimal production length and yield. After harvest, the

crop needs to be cooled down to remove field heat and placed in a refrigerator or cooler where there is high humidity. Removing field heat will avoid moisture loss and wilting and preserve quality and shelf life. Cucumbers should be stored between 50-55 F (95% humidity) for 10-14 days.

Preserve cucumbers by pickling and canning.

Nutrition

Cucumbers Are Nutritious and Good for You

Good source of vitamin A

Important for eye health, a strong immune system and cell growth.

Good source of vitamin K

Helps your body heal and is important for bone health.

High in potassium

Essential for body function, especially the heart, kidney, nerves, bones and muscles.

Great source of dietary fiber

Important for bowel health, lowering cholesterol, controlling blood sugar and maintaining a healthy weight.

Recipes

Basics of cooking with cucumbers: extension.purdue.edu/foodlink/food.php?food=cucumber
General information on selecting, pairing, preparing and storing. Also includes a list of recipes.

Video on how to prepare cucumbers: youtu.be/ajXtU061jdw

Ever wondered about the basics of how to prepare cucumbers? Chef Allison Kingery shows a couple of options for preparing this vegetable.

Guide to quick process pickles: extension.purdue.edu/extmedia/HHS/HHS-807-W.pdf

Learn how to pickle! Includes canning procedures and many different pickle recipes.

National Center for Home Food Preservation Guides to

Pickling: nchfp.uga.edu/how/cucumber_pick.html

Fermenting: nchfp.uga.edu/how/can6a_ferment.html

Taste Test Ideas



Quick Pickles



Cucumber Wrap



Cucumber Sushi or Spring Rolls

Other websites with many cucumber recipes:

Arizona Health Zone

Visit www.azhealthzone.org/recipes and search for cucumber recipes.

USDA MyPlate Kitchen

Visit www.myplate.gov/myplate-kitchen/recipes and search for cucumber recipes.

California's Eat Fresh

Visit eatfresh.org/find-a-recipe and search for cucumber recipes.

Produce for Better Health Foundation

fruitsandveggies.org/fruits-and-veggies/cucumber/?view=recipes
Recipes include gazpacho, apple pear cucumber salad and more.

Louisiana Harvest of the Month Program recipe: Tomato & Cucumber Salad

The Louisiana Harvest of the Month program is designed to bring fresh local agricultural products into participating schools and communities. Each month, one Louisiana agricultural product is highlighted throughout the school. All Louisiana Farm to School recipes are developed, tasted and rated by the LSU College of Agriculture School of Nutrition and Food Sciences. In addition to being tested for overall flavor, color and texture, we strive for recipes that have low-cost and easy-to-find ingredients, easy-to-follow instructions and a reasonable preparation time.

Louisiana HARVEST of the MONTH

Tomato & Cucumber Salad

Home Recipe

Serves: 4
Prep Time: 10 minutes

Ingredients

Dressing

- ¼ cup of olive oil
- 2 Tbsp of red wine vinegar
- 1 tsp of dried oregano
- ½ tsp salt
- Freshly cracked pepper

Salad

- 4 Roma tomatoes OR 2 medium tomatoes (1 cup)
- 1 medium cucumber (¾ cup)
- ½ of a small red onion (⅓ cup)

Nutrients Per ½ Cup Serving

- | | |
|-----------------|--------|
| • Calories | 140 |
| • Total Fat | 14 g |
| • Saturated Fat | 2 g |
| • Cholesterol | 0 mg |
| • Sodium | 5 mg |
| • Carbohydrates | 5 g |
| • Dietary Fiber | 1 g |
| • Protein | 1 g |
| • Calcium | 20 mg |
| • Iron | 1 mg |
| • Potassium | 236 mg |
| • Vitamin C | 11 mg |
| • Vitamin A | 28 mcg |

Cooking Instructions

1. Whisk olive oil, red wine vinegar, oregano, salt, and freshly cracked pepper in a bowl OR combine in a jar and shake until mixed. Set the dressing aside to allow the flavors to blend.
2. Thinly slice* tomato, cucumber, and red onion. Place them in a large bowl.
3. Pour the dressing over the sliced vegetables and toss to coat. Serve immediately or refrigerate until ready to eat. The onions will become milder as they marinate in the dressing.

*Vegetables can be diced if preferred.



For More Information
louisianafarmtoschool@agcenter.lsu.edu
www.SeedstoSuccess.com

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Authors:

Johannah Frelier, M.P.H.

JFrelier@agcenter.lsu.edu

Louisiana Farm to School Program Manager
Louisiana State University Agricultural Center

Denyse Cummins, M.S.

DCummins@agcenter.lsu.edu

Extension Horticulturist
Louisiana State University Agricultural Center

Carl Motsenbocker, Ph.D.

CMotsenbocker@agcenter.lsu.edu

Louisiana Farm to School Executive Director
Professor of Horticulture and Sustainable Agriculture
Louisiana State University Agricultural Center

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