

Did You Know?



Pepper *Piper nigrum*

- The common pepper plant is a tropical woody vine, native to Sri Lanka and southern India and grows in USDA zone 10b-11.
- The pendulous flower spikes have as many as 100 flowers on them which then become the fruit (drupes) or peppercorns. The peppercorns ripen to a yellowish red color.
- Considered the “king of spices” with a long history of both culinary and medicinal uses.
- Peppercorns were once rare and literally worth their weight in gold and used as currency.
- In fact, 3,000 pounds of pepper was one of the ransom demands of the king of the Visigoths when invading Rome in A.D. 408.
- Pepper that is commercially produced for pepper shakers is from *Piper nigrum*.
- Black, white and green peppercorns all come from the same plant. Black peppercorns are picked before they are ripe, while still green, and allowed to dry. White peppercorns on the other hand, are picked ripe, but are hulled revealing a white kernel. Green peppercorns are the dried unripe fruit that is brined.
- Pink peppercorns are another plant entirely--*Schinus molle*.
- Since volatile oils are released when grinding, pepper is spicier when freshly ground.
- Black pepper was used for medicine by the ancient Greeks.
- Black pepper has been used to treat a variety of ailments for centuries by Europeans, Asians and Ayurvedic healers. These include digestive issues, easing flatulence, addressing ear aches, vision problems, coughs, colds, breathing and heart problems as well as to improve appetite.

Black pepper has constituents that give it antioxidant, antibacterial, and anti-inflammatory properties.

- Piperine is the key alkaloid component of black pepper. Current research continues on its ability to assist in cognitive brain functioning, boosting the absorption of nutrients and in improving gastrointestinal functionality.

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