

## Chili Pequin - *Capsicum annuum*

Shade-tolerant plants with color in the summer are few and far between. The Chili Pequin is right at home in the dry shade of the landscape. This herbaceous shrub is our native pepper and they are edible, albeit extremely hot, and used in seasoning.

This pepper can become a dense shrub, if given adequate water and dappled sunlight. The understory shrub can grow from two feet tall upwards to three or four feet. With its small, thin leaves and green branches, the white-blooming blooming shrub produces peppers from summer to first frost.

Treat this pepper as an annual or use in containers. It can be a perennial in milder winters, however. In the Valley it's an evergreen and produces little chilies all year. However in the northern portions of the state this ornamental pepper should be considered an annual.

Use this ornamental pepper as accents underneath shade trees, but since birds (especially mockingbirds) love the chillies, it will spread and re-seed readily, so be sure to give it lots of room. It is heat and drought tolerant and grows just about anywhere and most all soil types including sand, loam, clay, caliche, and limestone, preferably well-drained, rich soils kept evenly moist.

Propagate chili pequin from seed.

Interesting Tidbits:

- The chili pequin is a direct descendent of the jalapeño and bell pepper. (Bell peppers contain a recessive gene that eliminates the capsaicin-heat- in the fruit.)
- Capsaicin the active ingredient in peppers, is a colorless, pungent, crystalline compound that is derived from capsicum. It depletes the chemical messengers that send signals through the pain-sensing peripheral nerves, thus deadening the sensation of pain even when its cause remains present. In general, the hotter the pepper, the greater its medicinal value.
- Research on capsaicin's ability to decrease pain has been in the areas of chronic pain, arthritic pain, migraine pain, and neuropathic cancer pain. Capsaicin has a hyperemic effect, which means that it increases blood flow similar to when an area is inflamed. When applied to the skin in cream form, the area becomes red, warm, and may become slightly swollen. Many individuals experience a localized burning sensation when a cream containing capsaicin is applied to the skin. However, with repeated use, the burning sensation usually disappears, and pain relief is noted.

