

Bitter gourd

Bitter gourd, commonly known as karela, is a popular vegetable in Indian cuisine. It is not only used in dishes for its unique bitter taste but is also known for its health benefits. Growing bitter gourd in your kitchen garden can be a rewarding experience as it is a low-maintenance crop that requires minimal care.

Characteristics	Description
Name	Bitter gourd (karela)
Scientific name	Momordica charantia
Weeks it takes to grow	12-16 weeks
Harvest per plant in kgs	3-4 kgs

List of Varieties

There are various varieties of bitter gourd that can be grown in India, such as Indian long, Chinese, hybrid, and Arka Harit. Each variety has its unique characteristics, including shape, size, and taste. It is essential to choose the right variety that suits your climatic conditions and soil type.

Soil Conditions

Bitter gourd requires well-drained, fertile soil with a pH range of 5.5-6.7. The soil should be rich in organic matter, and a soil test is recommended to ensure the soil's suitability. Adequate drainage is necessary to prevent waterlogging, which can lead to root rot.

Caring in Different Weeks

Week 1-2: Once the seeds are sown, it is essential to water the soil adequately to ensure proper germination. Ensure the

soil is moist but not waterlogged.

Week 3-4: Once the seedlings emerge, thin them out to ensure that there is enough space for them to grow. Apply a balanced fertilizer to promote healthy growth.

Week 5-6: Bitter gourd plants require regular weeding to prevent competition for nutrients and water. Water the plants twice a week to keep the soil moist.

Week 7-8: Apply a potassium-rich fertilizer to encourage flower and fruit formation.

Week 9-10: The plant will start flowering at this stage. It is essential to remove any diseased or damaged leaves or fruits to prevent the spread of disease.

Week 11-12: Harvest the fruits when they are green and slightly tender to touch. Leaving the fruits to ripen on the vine will result in a bitter taste.

Harvest Time

Bitter gourd takes around 70-80 days to mature and produce fruit. The best time to harvest the fruit is when it is green and tender. Waiting for the fruit to turn yellow will result in a bitter taste.

Nutrition in the Fruit

Bitter gourd is known for its health benefits and is a rich source of vitamin C, vitamin A, and iron. It is also low in calories and is an excellent addition to a weight-loss diet.

How Much Can One Harvest from a Small Kitchen Garden? One bitter gourd plant can yield around 15-20 fruits in a season, depending on the variety and growing conditions. With proper care and maintenance, a small kitchen garden can produce a

significant yield of bitter gourd.

Conclusion

Bitter gourd is an easy-to-grow vegetable that can provide a bountiful harvest in a small kitchen garden. With proper care and maintenance, it can be a low-maintenance crop that adds unique flavor and nutritional value to your meals.