

# Guide to Growing Bitter Melon



## Profile and Nutrition Facts

Bitter melon, or bitter gourd, is a green and white tender, vining vegetable that lives to its name in flavor, a slightly bitter flavor profile. Bitter melon is high in antioxidants and have anti-inflammatory benefits.

Bitter melon is used in Asian and Caribbean cuisine. Varieties of bitter melon include *Chinese* that grows a more bumpy variety, whereas *Indian* result in a smooth and light colored fruit. Both fruit and leaves are edible.

## Planting guide

Bitter melon requires trellising to vin upwards, with well drained, highly nourished soil. Plant from seed during warm season only, after last frost date. Mulch around seedling after established.

Consider planting near beans, corn, peas, pumpkin, and squash.

## How to maintain

Bitter melon needs to be well watered, and because the plant requires highly nourished soil, ongoing bimonthly application of fertilizer, such as fish emulsion, is recommended.

Poor pollination will limit fruit, so ensure adequate airflow with proper trellising and spacing. Common pests include vine borers and aphids.

## How to harvest

Maturity dates vary by variety, from 70 to 80 days. Plants are best grown on a trellis to ensure a straight shaped fruit. Harvest when approximately 4-6 inches long, and fruit inside should be tender, not spongy. To harvest, cut fruit and leaves off vine with harvesting shears, avoiding damage to the main vine stem.



## How to enjoy bitter melon

Bitter melon is consumed as a cooked vegetable.. Leaves can be used in stir fry, curries, and soups. Bitter melon have large seeds and yellow flesh; usually larger fruit will be cored, then cut up and used in stir fry, sautes, and fried. Recipes often include a sweetener and/or spices to lessen the vegetable's bitterness.