

# *Capsicum annuum* Ornamental Pepper<sup>1</sup>

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## Introduction

Ornamental Peppers reach 10 to 20 inches in height and are grown as annuals or pot plants, producing colorful fruits from May until frost (Fig. 1). In warmer climates, Ornamental Peppers are perennial and actually one of the best bedding plants for hot weather conditions, performing beautifully as a ground cover in mixed flower borders, as an edging, or in containers. Even though they can be perennial in USDA hardiness zones 9b, 10 and 11, plants are usually changed out at the end of the season. Fruits are available in a wide range of colors, from red, purple, yellow, orange, or whites. Several colors are often seen at the same time on plants as the fruits ripen and change color. While the peppers are said to be edible, most palates will find them much too hot.

## General Information

**Scientific name:** *Capsicum annuum*

**Pronunciation:** KAP-sick-um AN-yoo-um

**Common name(s):** Ornamental Pepper, Bush Red Pepper

**Family:** *Solanaceae*

**Plant type:** annual

**USDA hardiness zones:** all zones (Fig. 2)

**Planting month for zone 7:** Jun; Jul

**Planting month for zone 8:** May; Jun

**Planting month for zone 9:** Mar; Apr; May; Sep; Oct

**Planting month for zone 10 and 11:** Feb; Mar; Apr; May; Oct; Nov; Dec

**Origin:** not native to North America



Figure 1. Ornamental Pepper.

**Uses:** container or above-ground planter; mass planting; border

**Availability:** generally available in many areas within its hardiness range

## Description

**Height:** 1 to 1.5 feet

**Spread:** 1 to 1.5 feet

**Plant habit:** round

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Figure 2. Shaded area represents potential planting range.

**Plant density:** dense

**Growth rate:** moderate

**Texture:** medium

### Foliage

**Leaf arrangement:** alternate

**Leaf type:** simple

**Leaf margin:** entire

**Leaf shape:** ovate

**Leaf venation:** bowed

**Leaf type and persistence:** not applicable

**Leaf blade length:** 2 to 4 inches

**Leaf color:** green

**Fall color:** not applicable

**Fall characteristic:** not applicable

### Flower

**Flower color:** white

**Flower characteristic:** inconspicuous and not showy

### Fruit

**Fruit shape:** elongated

**Fruit length:** 3 to 6 inches

**Fruit cover:** fleshy

**Fruit color:** orange; white; yellow

**Fruit characteristic:** persists on the plant

### Trunk and Branches

**Trunk/bark/branches:** not applicable

**Current year stem/twig color:** green

**Current year stem/twig thickness:** thick

### Culture

**Light requirement:** plant grows in full sun

**Soil tolerances:** clay; sand; acidic; loam

**Drought tolerance:**

**Soil salt tolerances:** unknown

**Plant spacing:** 6 to 12 inches

## Other

**Roots:** not applicable

**Winter interest:** not applicable

**Outstanding plant:** not particularly outstanding

**Invasive potential:** not known to be invasive

**Pest resistance:** long-term health usually not affected by pests

## Use and Management

Ornamental Peppers will grow quite easily in full sun or partial shade and do best in a fairly rich and evenly moist growing medium. They can be planted on 12 to 18 inch centers to form a solid mass of colorful fruits.

Propagation is by seed, which should not be covered with soil.

There are many cultivars for fruit size and color.

## Pests and Diseases and Diseases

No pests or diseases are of major concern except for occasional leaf-chewing insects.