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

Figure 1. Ornamental Pepper.

Family: Solanaceae

Plant type: annual

USDA hardiness zones: all zones (Fig. 2)

Planting month for zone 7: Jun; Jul


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Capsicum annuum Ornamental Pepper

Figure 2. Shaded area represents potential planting range.

**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

**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

**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

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**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.