

your garden needs...



## ...cucumbers and gherkins

Species: Cucumis sativus

Family: Cucurbitaceae

Common name: cucumber and gherkin

Height: vine

Grow as: annual

Harvest period: summer

Use [packetseeds.com](http://packetseeds.com) outdoor ridge cucumber **Tessa F<sub>1</sub>**, or choose from a range of gherkins and cornichons: **Anulka F<sub>1</sub>**, **Dar**, **Odys F<sub>1</sub>** and **Polan F<sub>1</sub>**. All at 95 pence per packet.

There are three classifications of cucumber: greenhouse or indoor, outdoor or ridge, and gherkins or pickling.

Ridge cucumbers give similar results to greenhouse cucumbers and are more easy to cultivate. We offer our speciality Tessa F<sub>1</sub> which we think is much better for an allotment or garden.

Gherkins are typically used for pickling and preserves. We offer several varieties for you to try, and some suggestions how to use them.

**Ridge cucumber Tessa F<sub>1</sub>**: use as any greenhouse cucumber: eaten raw for salads, sandwiches etc. Easy to grow with a sweet, juicy taste. In our own tests, burp free! Taste remains good even when fruit starts to turn yellow. Slightly smaller than supermarket cucumbers, about 20cm long and 3cm diameter. This variety is highly recommended.



**Growing**: there are two ways to grow the plants. Either, grow on the ground on ridges as in the photo, or alternatively grow supported on stakes or netting. Plant out in a sheltered, sunny position once all risk of frost has ended. Fruits can be harvested from June until September. **Tessa F<sub>1</sub>** is a hungry feeder so give plenty of nutrition throughout the season and ideally a base dressing prior to planting out.



**Sowing**: sow from March until early May under protection. Prick out into 9cm (3.5 inch) pots or similar until ready to plant out. Germination temperature 25°C (75°F)

**Gherkins**: are cultivated almost exclusively outdoors and harvested when they are two to eight inches long. Generally pickled rather than eaten raw. A distinction is drawn between types with nearly smooth skins and those with warty or prickly ones. Cornichons are gherkins less than two inches in length. They are generally pickled in vinegar. The characteristic taste of the larger pickled fruits comes mainly from lactic fermentation. Dill is often used in pickling cucumbers; hence the use of the term 'dill pickles' (see [packetseeds.com](http://packetseeds.com) herb section).

**Anulka F<sub>1</sub>**: use as cornichon, for pickling. Medium early variety. Harvest period July to mid September. Plant in rows, 15cm between plants within rows, 80—100cm between rows.

**Dar**: use as gherkin, for salads, pickling or souring. Compact bushy variety, harvest period mid July to mid September. Plant in rows, 15cm between plants within rows, 50cm between rows.

**Odys F<sub>1</sub>**: gherkin for salads and souring. Medium early variety with good weather tolerance. Harvest period mid July to mid September. Plant in rows, 15cm between plants within rows, 80—100cm between rows.

**Polan F<sub>1</sub>**: use for pickling or souring. Early variety resistant to yellowing. Harvest period July—mid September. Plant in rows, 15cm between plants within rows, 80—100cm between rows.

**Growing:** grow on the ground Plant out in a sheltered, sunny position once all risk of frost has ended. Fruits can be harvested from July until September. Plants are hungry feeders so give plenty of nutrition throughout the growing season and ideally a base dressing prior to planting out.

**Sowing:** sow April—May under protection, prick out into 9cm (3.5 inch) pots, and plant out when risk of frost has passed. Germination temperature 25°C (75°F).

**Pickling and souring:** the processes use the preservative qualities of salt combined with those of acid, such as acetic acid (vinegar). Acid environments inhibit bacteria. To make pickles, cucumbers are soaked in brine for several days, then rinsed and stored in vinegar to preserve them for years. Recipes and further details can be found on the Penn State University website—follow the link <http://pubs.cas.psu.edu/FreePubs/pdfs/uk123.pdf>.

**General:** The cucumber is a vegetable that comes in many different shapes and sizes. Fruits start out green but change colour as they ripen to shades of white, yellowish, orange-yellow, or brownish yellow. They may reach weights of more than 1.5kg (3 lb) and grow to lengths of 35cm (14 inches), with a diameter of up to 10cm (4 inches). The skin of the young fruit can be covered with prickly warts, which disappear with ripening. When green varieties turn yellow, they are overripe and can have a bitter taste.

The cucumber is a recovering species: when the fruit are picked new, young fruits grow in their place; if they are not picked, then no new fruits develop.

The origin of the cucumber is northern India, where it has been grown for over 3,000 years. It was first recorded in Mesopotamia around 2,000 BC.

The cucumber did not reach Europe until the Middle Ages, and was first cultivated in greenhouses in 19th century England.

All types are high in carbohydrates, vitamin C, iron, and potassium. They have diuretic properties. Juice is beneficial for internal inflammations, including a sore throat or kidney flare-ups. Most beneficial nutrients are contained in the skin and are lost when the fruit is peeled. All fruits should be harvested before they mature.

Ethylene gas given off by tomatoes and other fruit also turns the fruit yellow, so they should be stored separately.



Anulka F<sub>1</sub>



Dar



Odys F<sub>1</sub>



Polan F<sub>1</sub>

### **Method for Making Cornichons**

Cornichons are tart pickles made from tiny gherkin cucumbers.

Suggestion here gives approximately 1 litre (2 pints) of pickles.

#### **Ingredients**

- 1kg (2 pounds) small gherkins, cut into 1.5cm (1/2-inch) spears
- 1/2 cup salt
- 2 cups white distilled vinegar (5% acidity)
- 1 clove garlic, halved
- 1 tablespoon chopped onion
- 1/2 tablespoon peppercorns
- 2 whole cloves
- 2 bay leaves

#### **Directions**

Prepare the cucumbers: toss cucumbers with 1/4 cup salt plus 2 tablespoons salt then drain thoroughly. Rinse thoroughly with cold water and set aside.

Process the pickles:

- Combine the vinegar, 2 cups water, and remaining salt in a small saucepan over heat and bring to a boil.
- Sterilize jars and keep hot.
- Divide the garlic, onion, peppercorns, cloves, and bay leaves between the jars. Add the cucumbers up to 1/2 inch from the top of each jar.
- Pour the hot vinegar mixture over the cucumbers, leaving small head space.
- Remove air bubbles, securely cap each jar, and sterilize using the boiling water canning method for 10 minutes.
- Cool jars, check seals, and store in a cool, dark place for at least 3 weeks before opening.

Pickles will keep for up to one year. Unprocessed pickles will keep in refrigerator for up to 4 weeks.

### **Souring of Cucumbers**

(Traditional Polish Recipe)

Take middle-sized cucumbers, wash and put them into a jar along with:

- leaf of grape vine (1 middle-sized in the jar)
- 3 to 4 leaves of a cherry tree (3-4 pieces in the jar)
- piece of horse-radish (3cm section, either root or leaf)
- 1 clove of garlic, peeled
- dill (1 inflorescence)
- salt water solution (tablespoon of salt in 1 litre of water)
- (basil leaves can also be added)

Place cucumbers in prepared jars to become saturated. Leave jars at room temperature for 5-7 days.

Once the cucumber colour has bleached out, they are ready to eat.