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Redefining Food and Agriculture

GHERKINS



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INDEX

1. Gherkins: An Introduction	1
2. Growing Practices	2
3. Diseases	2
4. Insect-Pest	3
5. Harvesting	3

Gherkins: An Introduction

Gherkins are known as 'small cucumbers' as it belongs to the same family as cucumber. Scientific name of gherkin is same as that of cucumber i.e. *Cucumis sativus*, but cultivar is different. Gherkin is a cucurbitaceous plant grown for its small, prickly, cylindrical green fruits which are with thin green rinds and white flesh. Gherkin is a tropical gourd plant and is climbing in growth habit. Gherkin belongs to gourd family i.e. Cucurbitaceae. Small immature fruits of gherkins are used for pickling and hence it is commonly called as pickling cucumber. There is another West Indian variety called Burr Gherkin (*Cucumis anguria*) which is slightly different from pickling gherkins..



Growing Practices

Introduction: Since gherkin is a tropical plant, plenty of sunlight and water are required for its healthy growth.

Sowing: Generally, direct sowing of seeds in the main field is practiced in gherkin cultivation. There are two methods of sowing: ridge sowing and furrow sowing. In ridge sowing, ridges are prepared at proper spacing and seeds are sown on ridges. In furrow sowing, furrows are made and seeds are sown on both edges of the furrows.

Seed Rate: Seed rate recommended is approximately 1 to 2 kg/ha.

Site Preparation: During land preparation, farm yard manure (FYM) @10-15 Kg/Ha is incorporated into the top soil to enrich soil fertility.

Labour Requirement: Growing gherkins can be a labour intensive process because of the extensive staking and support needed for training the trailing stems of these plants. Approximately 1000 man days are required for a gherkin crop.

Irrigation: Drip irrigation is recommended for large scale cultivation of gherkin plants.

Diseases: Fungal diseases such as powdery mildew, downey mildew, and Fusarium wilt, and viral diseases. These fungal diseases may be controlled by growing resistant varieties.

Insect-Pests: Major insect-pests that are found affecting a gherkin crop are fruit fly and red pumpkin beetle. Integrated pest management practices (IPM) including cultural and biological pest control methods may be adopted for the complete elimination of these insect-pests.

Weed Control: Weeds can be controlled by using manual and mechanical weed control practices.

Harvesting: Gherkin is a short duration crop. The crop can be harvested within 2-3 months of planting seeds. Harvesting is normally done when the fruits reach 4 to 8 cm (1 to 3 inches) in length.

Yield: Average yield per hectare is 8 to 10 tonnes.



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