

Problem: Bitter Cucumbers



Description: A bitter taste in cucumbers is the result of stress that can be caused by a number of factors including heredity, moisture, temperature, soil characteristics and disease. Most often this occurs during the hot part of the summer or later in the growing season.

Two compounds, cucurbitacins B and C, give rise to the bitter taste. Though often only the stem end is affected, at times the entire fruit is bitter. Also, most of the bitter taste is found in and just under the skin. Bitter fruit is not the result of cucumbers cross pollinating with squash or melons. These plants cannot cross pollinate with one another.

Recommendations: Often newer varieties are less likely to become bitter than older ones. Proper cultural care is also often helpful. Make sure your plants have the following.

- Well-drained soil with a pH between 6.0 and 6.5. Plenty of organic matter also helps.
- Mulch. A mulch helps conserve moisture and keep roots cool during hot, dry weather.
- Adequate water especially during the fruiting season.
- Disease and insect control.

Bitter fruit may possibly be saved if the stem end is removed and the cucumber is peeled.

References:

1. [Bitter Cucumbers](#), Horticulture & Home Pest News, 7/12/2006, Iowa State University

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