



Piper Nigrum

STEP 1:

Moisten seed-starting potting mix lightly with distilled or spring water. Tap water, which has been treated with chemicals such as chlorine, can prohibit proper germination of piper nigrum seeds.

STEP 2:

Fill seed-starting containers with moistened potting mix then insert one to two peppercorn seeds per container, 1/2 inch deep.

STEP 3:

Cover seeds lightly with potting mix, then water each pot to set the seeds.

STEP 4:

Place seeds in an area that maintains temperatures of 70 to 85 degrees. The piper nigrum is a tropical vine that requires consistent warm temperatures and at least 50 percent humidity. Growing lamps can help to maintain the required temperature when sunlight is at a minimum.

STEP 5:

Maintain constant moisture levels during germination by watering at least once per week. Do not allow soil to dry out between waterings.

STEP 6:

Prepare large container for transplant, once the piper nigrum plant develops two to three sets of true leaves. Add a blend of high quality potting soil, compost and a water-soluble fertilizer with a concentration of 10-10-10 to 14-14-14, according to manufacturer's directions.

STEP 7:

Dig a hole, remove the seedling from the original pot and place it in the new container. Cover with soil and water to set the plant into its new location.

STEP 8:

Insert a stake into the container, at least an inch from the root ball of the piper nigrum plant. Peppercorn vines can reach 8 to 12 feet in length, so you may want to insert several stakes in the pot to allow for future growth. As the plant grows, loosely tie it to the stake with twine.

STEP 9:

Maintain the proper growth climate by moving peppercorn vines outdoors when temperatures reach 70 degrees or more. Once fall arrives, or temperatures are expected to drop below 50 degrees, move the vines back inside. Choose an area that offers full sunlight, and utilize growing lights to maintain optimal temperatures.

STEP 10:

Harvest peppercorns, after fruit clusters full form, at any stage from green to red. Peppercorns do not turn black on the vine. To get black peppercorns, you must harvest the berries in the green stage, then allow them to dry thoroughly, at which point they turn black. White pepper is obtained from fully ripened peppercorn berries that are harvested and dried. The red hulls are removed by a labor-intensive process of soaking and rubbing, revealing the white seed which is then dried to make white pepper.

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