



Gherkins from Poland – Anna, Jaek and Agnieszka



Description of area

In this area of Poland it is mostly subsistence growing, and the summers are hotter but winters are much colder than the UK, with deep snow in the winter most years. These harsh winters make it important to grow crops which can be stored for winter use.

Background to Agnieszka

Agnieszka came from a farming background, where people are used to growing their own food, making bread, butter, cheese, bacon and pickles. She and Jaek have lived in the UK for over 5 years and have an allotment in Walsall.

“My parents used to have a farm and a farm garden and they used to grow virtually everything”

Crops grown in the region

Cabbage, beetroot, celery, beans, carrots, garlic and onions are very popular crops in Poland. Gherkins, tomatoes, cucumbers and watermelons are also grown. Polish people are also very fond of harvesting wild fruits such as wild cherries, raspberries and bilberries.

“They make a Polish type salad which is called misery, mizeria, which is grated cucumber with sour cream or single cream and salt... pepper and sugar and sometimes vinegar and it's a type of salad”

Growing Gherkins

Gherkins in Poland are usually just planted directly into the soil, not started off indoors as they are here. The rough-skinned fruit will grow into full sized cucumbers in some varieties but stay small in others.

“Sow them in mid May after last frost ...dig a trench and fill it up with manure... cover it... put seeds in more or less 10cm apart and you have to water a lot... it needs to be warm because gherkins like it warm”

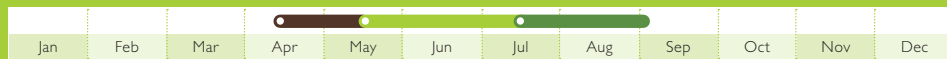
Growing and using Gherkins in the UK

Gherkins are not frost hardy so can only be grown outdoors in summer. It's often better to start plants off indoors before moving outside in the uncertain UK climate.

How to grow

Crop details: Half hardy annual: seed. Time to harvest: 2 months after sowing. Grow with cucurbits in rotation. Size: medium to large.

Growing timeline: Sow indoors April–May, Plant out late May to June, Harvest late July and August until frosts.



Sow

Plant indoors in small pots or trays with large cells in early April to May. Transplant to a sunny, sheltered site with good drainage after last frosts. Space plants 1m/3ft apart.

Grow

Plants will benefit from application of well-rotted garden compost before the growing season starts, but then require little other care apart from keeping them free of weeds and watering in dry weather.

Harvest

Cut fruits as soon as large enough to eat or pickle.

Cook

Gherkins are often pickled with salt and vinegar for winter storage, but can also be eaten raw in a salad. Their tough warty skins means they may have to be peeled first if eating fresh. To pickle gherkins, take a large strong glass jar and sterilise it by rinsing with boiling water. Put in a handful of flowering dill with plenty of leaves and a little fresh scraped horseradish root. Add the washed gherkins and sprinkle thickly with salt, at least two tablespoons for 10 fruits. Fill up the jar with boiling water. The gherkins must be submerged, if they try to float cover with a plate. Cover jar with a cloth and put it somewhere dark and cool to ferment. This will take between 7-20 days. Taste them from time to time, when they are as you like them store in the fridge. Eat within 3 months if you want the gherkins to stay crunchy, or longer if you like them soft.

