



From the confidential files of
the BC School Fruit & Vegetable
Nutritional Program
(a.k.a. BCSFVNP)



WE'VE UNEARTHED SOME INTRIGUING SECRETS FROM INSIDE THE WORLD OF BC HOT HOUSES. YOUR MISSION, SHOULD YOU CHOOSE TO ACCEPT IT, IS TO EAT TODAY'S SNACK AND MEMORIZE THE SECRETS ON THIS PAGE. GOOD LUCK.

SECRET #1 VEGETABLE IMPOSTERS REVEALED.

Cucumbers, along with melons, pumpkins, zucchini, and squash, actually belong to the gourd family called Cucurbitaceae. Like their greenhouse companions, bell peppers & tomatoes, they're not vegetables, they're fruit!

SECRET #3 THEY'RE NOT BABIES AT ALL.

Baby Bell Peppers aren't even immature peppers. They're a variety developed and grown the same way as their larger cousins, and are just smaller, sweeter versions. Mini (Baby) Cucumbers aren't babies either but a variety of the Long English Cucumber whose lack of seeds and thin skin earned it the name: 'Burpless'.

SECRET #5 MINI CUCUMBERS ARE A PICKY FIELD CROP.

Wind scars their sensitive (edible) skin, while changing temperatures and humidity may cause it to become tough and difficult to digest. Cucumbers thrive in the constant, protective environment of a Hot House. After harvesting, growers wrap them in plastic to keep them fresh and crispy.



SECRET #2 GREEN POWER.

All baby peppers start out a shade of green and change colour as they mature. While the green fruit is ready to pick after about 6 weeks, it takes another 3 to 6 weeks to develop to yellow, orange, and red. While changing colour, ripening peppers also increase in sweetness and vitamin C content. One pepper plant will give us green, and either yellow, red or orange peppers to choose from.

SECRET #4 THE SECRET IS NOT IN THE SOIL.

Inside a Hot House, Bell Pepper plants grow with their roots suspended in nutrient-filled water. Why? Hydroponic growing uses less space, requires less irrigation, and crops can be grown almost year-round. Growers also use a soil-free system made of sawdust or coconut fibre, and rock-wool (a material made from rock spun into blocks) to start seedlings. A drip irrigation system provides water and nutrients, and carbon dioxide helps them grow healthy and strong.

SECRET #6 PICKLES, DILLS, GHERKINS, AND CORNICHONS – THEY'RE ALL CUCUMBERS IN DISGUISE.

They're Pickling Cucumbers – a shorter, less evenly shaped variety with bumpy skin. Preserving them in brine, vinegar or other fermentation solution keeps them fresh and crunchy, while spices add tart flavour. Awesome companions to hot dogs and hamburgers!

THE DOUBLE SCOOP ON
THIS WEEK'S SNACK!

HOT HOUSE
FRUIT



HOT HOUSE HISTORY & HOW TO...

FOOD FIT FOR AN EMPEROR Luckily for us, cucumbers were a favourite delicacy of the ancient Roman Emperor Tiberius. To supply Tiberius with his daily cucumber (every day of the year) Imperial gardeners mounted growing beds on wheels that they could move around to follow the sun. During winter, they covered the beds with protective sheets of a transparent stone called 'mica' (glass had not yet been invented). They called these early greenhouses 'speculariums'.

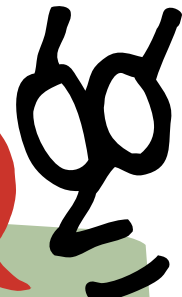
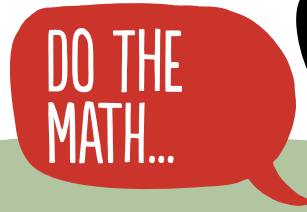
DELICACIES UNDER GLASS Tomato plants need lots of sunshine, warmth and cooling breezes. Pepper plants thrive in warm temperatures. Semi-tropical cucumber plants need heat, intense light and humidity. Sound like typical winter weather in BC? Like the Imperial growers, we use greenhouses to grow crops nearly year-round. (Growers take a break in December and January for greenhouse housekeeping and to start new plants). Rapid growth inside the greenhouse also allows growers to harvest three to four cucumber crops a year; pick fruit from one crop of Bell Pepper plants from March until October; and harvest tomatoes until November.

BC's Hot House crops are specialty products that can't easily be grown in many other provinces or countries. Growers not only supply us with fresh produce year-round, they sell to a global marketplace. Imagine the fresh Mini Cucumbers like the ones you're snacking on are also being enjoyed across the country in Halifax, even on the other side of the world in London and Tokyo.



French explorer Jacques Cartier discovered wild cucumbers growing near the site of Montreal in 1535.

? **WHAT ELSE DID JACQUES CARTIER DISCOVER?**



Hot House growers produce a lot of food in a small amount of space – about 25kg(55lbs) of peppers or 51kg(113lbs) of cucumbers in a space the size of a bathtub. How do they grow so much in such a small space? High ceilings help. Growers string up pepper plants to overhead wires so they'll grow upward toward the sunlight. One pepper plant can reach up to 5m high, and cucumber plants can grow up to 15cm a day inside a Hot House.

How many days does it take for a cucumber vine to reach its typical height of 2.5m? (hint: 1m = 100cm) _____

Peter Piper picked a peck of pickled peppers. How many peppers did Peter Piper pick? _____

If your school got 3 pecks of peppers today, how many pounds(or kg) of peppers did your school get? (hint: 1 peck = about 5.4kg (12lbs) _____

If .68kg (1.5lbs) = 5 baby bell peppers, estimate how many peppers your school received: _____

diversity + quality = BC agriculture

