

The East London Garden Society

Plant Facts

Chilli



One of the new factors in European cuisine are chillies and they are becoming ever more present.

Here are some facts:

Chilli peppers originated in the Americas. After the Columbian Exchange many cultivars of chilli pepper spread across the world and was used in both food and medicine. Chillies were brought to Asia by Portuguese navigators during the 16th century.

India is the world's largest producer, consumer and exporter of chilli peppers. Chilli peppers have been a part of the human diet in the Americas since at least 7500 BC. The most recent research shows that chilli peppers were domesticated more than 6000 years ago being one of the first self-pollinating crops cultivated in Mexico.

Though there are only a few commonly used species, there are many cultivars and methods of preparing chilli peppers that have different names for culinary use. For example, green and red bell peppers are the same since immature peppers are green. The substances that give chilli peppers their intensity when

ingested or applied topically are capsaicin, together with several related chemicals and are collectively called capsaicinoids.

Dried chillies are often ground into powders. Dried whole chillies may be reconstituted before grinding to a paste. Many fresh chillies such as poblano have a tough outer skin that does not break down on cooking.