



# ARIZONA-SONORA DESERT MUSEUM

## PLANT CARE INFORMATION

### Chiltepin

*Capsicum annuum*

**DESCRIPTION:** The most likely founding father for many of the chile species alive today is this wild chiltepin which botanists assess to be the earliest surviving form of chile. It probably developed in the northern regions of South America and then spread throughout South and Central America and up to what is now known as Mexico and the United States border country. In fact, some believe that the Chiltepin has the widest distribution worldwide of any chile form the western hemisphere. It is fairly fast growing, to 6' tall or more. In warm weather, small white flowers are produced. Fruit are smaller than peas, but contain a high concentration of the chemical *capsaicin*, which our mouths interpret as hot. Most mammals find this unpleasant, whereas birds are unaffected. The secretion of capsaicin protects the fruit from consumption by mammals while the bright colors attract birds that will disperse the seeds. Many well known varieties of the *Capsicum annuum* are familiar to us; for example, Bell Pepper, which is sold in both its immature green state and its red, yellow or orange ripe state, Anaheim Chiles often used for stuffing, the dried Ancho Chile used to make chili powder, the mild-to-hot Jalapeño, and the smoked, ripe Jalapeño, known as a Chipotle.

**RECOMMENDED USE:** Use in shade, patio container, or to attract wildlife.

#### CULTURE:



**Hardiness:** Chiltepin is found in desert grasslands of south-central Arizona, so should be hardy to at least the mid-teens.



**Sun tolerance:** It can tolerate full sun, but thrives in dappled light.



**Watering and feeding:** Moderate water for best growth. Feeding a plant in the ground is not absolutely necessary, but may benefit the plant.



**Soil requirements:** Best in well-drained soil.



**Pruning:** Only to shape.