**The Chilli Plant**

Chillies are the hot fruits of a range of capsicum species that originally came from the warm northern regions of South America. In the past 500 years they have been traded across the globe, and today chillies are an integral ingredient in cuisines around the world.

**How to Grow..**

A chilli plant can for fruit all year round and will produce for 2-3 years. Chillies can range from being sweet and mild in flavour to being dangerously hot. They can be grown in containers or in the ground. The benefit of having your chillies in containers is that you can move them to the right position if initially they don’t do so well. They like full sun but some plants will prefer a bit of shade throughout the day. Chilli plants will adapt to most soil types but prefer an alkaline soil. Mulch when conditions are dry to avoid flowers dropping off and not getting any fruit. Harvesting encourages the plant to set more flowers. Not all chillies are red when they are ripe, some are green, and others are yellow, orange and purple. Pick fruit when ripe, they will not ripen after harvesting. Chilli juice can be highly irritating to the skin and especially to the eyes, so care needs to be taken. A very hot chilli can also burn under the fingernails. Don’t forget your gloves and if skin becomes irritated, rub the affected area with olive oil or yoghurt (water won’t help).

**The Benefits..**

Chilli contains up to seven times the vitamin C level of an orange. It has a range of health benefits, including fighting sinus congestion, aiding digestion and helping to relieve migraines and muscle, joint and nerve pain. It's also a good source of vitamins A and E, beta-carotene, folic acid and potassium.

**Things you probably didn’t know..**

* One of the hottest chillies was developed in Australia and is called the Trinidad Scorpion Butch T.
* In Africa, many farmers spray their crops with a chilli spray to keep elephants from eating them.
* Chillies will last for months in the freezer if they are kept in a sealed container.

**Recipe..**

Organic Pesticide: Chilli Garlic Spray

8-10 chillies, finely sliced

4 cloves of garlic, crushed and roughly chopped

1 tablespoon soap flakes

1L boiling water

* Combine all ingredients in a glass jar and set aside for 24 hours.
* Strain and pour into a spray bottle.
* Spray onto the foliage or fruit of any plant that is affected by pests.
* Remember to rinse if you are going to eat the leaves or fruit from a plant that has been sprayed with your pesticide.
* Use within 2 weeks.

