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ARIZONA-SONORA DESERT MUSEUM PLANT CARE INFORMATION

Chiltepin

Capsicum annuum var. glabriusculum

DESCRIPTION:

The Chiltepin is the closest wild relative and most likely ancestor for many of the cultivated chile pepper varieties belonging to the specie “annuum”- think Jalapeno, Hatch, Bell pepper etc. It originated in the northern regions of South America about 15 millions years ago and then, spread by birds, established itself throughout South and Central America and up to what is now known as Mexico and the United States border country, where it has been cultivated by humans since at least 6000 BC.

The Chiltepin has the widest distribution of any other wild chile. It is fast growing, to 5’ tall or more. Small white flowers are produced in warm weather, followed by small fruits containing a high concentration of the chemical *capsaicin*, (about 100.000 Scoville units) which our mouths interpret as hot. Most mammals find this unpleasant, whereas birds are unaffected. The capsaicin protects the fruit from consumption by mammals while the bright colors attract birds that will eat the fruit and disperse the seeds.

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.