

GM hybrid peppers developed in Israel

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Israeli researchers have produced genetically modified hybrid peppers that can be raised with minimal protection under moderate winter conditions.

The robust pepper varieties were developed by a research team headed by Yonatan Elkind of the Robert Smith Institute of Plant Sciences and Genetics in Agriculture at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem.

Elkind is to be presented an innovation award Tuesday during the Hebrew University's 69th Board of Governors meeting.

The researchers said the improvements embodied in the genetically enhanced peppers widen the ecological conditions under which they can be grown and also facilitate the use of simple greenhouses and netting instead of expensive structures.

The peppers, in various colors, have been raised to produce high yields under night-time conditions as low as 50 degrees Fahrenheit, which is much lower than previous hybrids that required temperatures higher than 64 degrees Fahrenheit and needed costly heating to grow and develop, the scientists said.

The new hybrids are characterized by high yields, a long growing season, resistance to viruses, firm fruit, good vine storage capacity, long shelf life and low sensitivity to cracking.

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