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Introduction and taxonomic history.

The genus Capsicum, like most other economically important genera f the Solanaceae (e.g. Lycopersicon, Solanum, Nicotiana), is New World origin. Species of Capsicum have long been cultivated for their pun- ent fruits, which are used as a condiment. It is a matter of common ob- ervation that in many cultivated plants the part of the plant which is of conomic significance exhibits considerable variability, and in the cul- vated species of Capsicum this is shown in the great diversity in colour, hape and size of the fruits.

Excessive emphasis on fruit characters led the pre-Linnaean taxon- mists to recognise a multiplicity of species of Capsicum, twenty-seven eing listed by Tournefort. Linnaeus himself in his Species Plantarum 753) reduced this number to two: C. annuum (herbaceous) and C. rutescens (shrubby). Following publication of the Species Plantarum, a eturn to the use of fruit shape and position to discriminate between forms esulted in another increase in the number of specific names applied within he genus. Dunal (1852), monographing Capsicum in De Candolle's rodromus, recognised fifty species, many with a number of varieties, esides listing fourteen doubtful or little-known species. However, as the time of Linnaeus, a reaction set in against this large number of pecies, distinguishable only on fruit characters, and the next revision f the genus, that of Irish (1898), marked a return to the Linnaean con- ept of two species, C. annuum and C. frutescens. Bailey (1923)