

# NuMex Sandia Select seed to be released

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SPECIAL TO THE SUN-NEWS

LASCRCES - A new chile pepper variety is now available for growers. For the first time, New Mexico State University's Chile Pepper Institute has released NuMex Sandia Select chile seed. This new Sandia cultivar allows the traditionally red chile pepper to be used as a green chile pepper.

"It's good. It's real good," said Jimmy Lytle, a third-generation Hatch chile farmer who grew the NuMex Sandia Select last summer as part of the university's research and trial process. "First, it's got a good flavor. It also has a nice, green color and the production is great. I think it's going to be a really good variety."

Sandia chile peppers, grown around the Mesilla Valley and up into Hatch, were originally released in 1956. Like most New Mexico chiles, Sandia starts out as green in the field. Unfortunately, Sandia chile peppers are usually shorter and have thinner fruit walls when compared to their relatives normally used for green chile. That's why growers in the region traditionally allow Sandia chile peppers to ripen into red pods before they are harvested. Then the pods are processed and used in red chile powder and in chile flakes.

"New Mexico growers asked for a thicker-walled Sandia, so they could use it as a green chile," said Paul Bosland, NMSU Regents Professor and director of the Chile Pepper Institute. "This is something we've been working on since 2001."



NMSU/COURTESY PHOTO

**For the first time, New Mexico State University's Chile Pepper Institute is ready to release NuMex Sandia Select chile seed.**

Researchers at the Chile Pepper Institute began to see if they could select for plant traits that would make Sandia useful as a green chile pepper. The process started with 15 different chile lines, and each was evaluated for taste, yield, disease resistance, pod structure and other plant habits. Each year a few of the most desirable lines were kept. Eventually, a winner emerged — NuMex Sandia Select. The new variety has a long, straight pod and a firm fruit wall, which Bosland said is perfect for use as a green chile.

NuMex Sandia Select seeds are available to growers through Biad Chili and

the Chile Pepper Institute. Growers seeking less than 10 pounds of seed should contact the Chile Pepper Institute at 575-646-3028. Growers needing 10 pounds of seed or more should contact Biad Chili at 575-525-0034. Flame-roasted green NuMex Sandia Select packaged into one-pound resealable bags is also available at the Chile Pepper Institute in Gerald Thomas Hall, Room 265. For information, visit [www.chilepepperinstitute.org](http://www.chilepepperinstitute.org).

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