



"Our Seeds Succeed"

Tomatoes

Tomatoes are the most popular home garden vegetable. They are high in vitamins, especially C and contain about 100 calories per pound. Tomatoes originated in the Andes mountains in South America and are a warm season crop. Plant growth patterns are classified into determinate and indeterminate. Determinate plants grow about 12 to 18 inches high and set fruit that ripen over a short time. Indeterminate vines keep elongating and set fruit all season. This type needs support from stakes or tomato cages.

PLANTING

Plant tomatoes in the sunniest spot of your garden. Do not crowd them! Because they are a warm season crop, unprotected transplants should be set in the garden 7-10 days after the last chance of frost. You can use walls O' water and plant 4 to 6 weeks earlier, or hotcaps or plastic to allow a week or two earlier. You can plant tomato seeds directly into the garden 10-14 days before the last frost. Seedlings will be sturdier and develop early branching. They will set nearly the same time as your transplants. Select transplants that are dark green, stocky, have 7-9 leaves and are 6-8 inches tall. Space plants that will be supported 1 1/2 to 2 feet apart. Non-supported plants should be spaced 2 to 3 feet in the row with spacing of 3 to 5 feet. Disturb the roots as little as possible and set the plants to the depth of the first leaves. Tall leggy plants can have lower leaves removed and all but the upper 4 inches buried reclining in a 4 in deep trench.

FERTILIZER

Tomatoes require less fertilizer than many garden vegetables. Too much fertilizer will produce excessive foliage and delay fruit ripening, place 3-4 tablespoons of complete fertilizer into a 6 inch deep hole. We recommend Tomato and Vegetable or Gardeners Special fertilizer. Set the tomato plant about 4 inches to the side of the fertilizer but don't let roots make contact. When fruit are golfball size, apply 1/4 cup of ammonium sulfate a foot or so from the plant and water in well for continued vine growth.

IRRIGATION

Soak the soil thoroughly at 7-10 day intervals once the plants are well established. Tomatoes like 1-2 inches of water per week. Light, frequent sprinkling, especially late in the day will encourage diseases. After the soil warms (mid-late-June) retain the moisture by mulching with grass clippings, leaves or sawdust. We also recommend at the time of planting to place a couple teaspoons of a water retaining material called Nutra Gel in the hole. This product expands when watered and retains the moisture. This means less watering for you. Irregular watering and lack of calcium, can cause blossom end rot. This is a leathery, dark colored spot that sits on the bottom 1/3 of the fruit.

SUPPORT

Wire cages 12-16 inches in diameter and 1-3 feet high will keep most of the ripening fruit off the ground. Indeterminate plants will require taller cages or staking pruning. Staking requires a little more work but makes harvesting easier. Select the main stem and remove side shoots where they arise at leaf joints, as it gets taller, loosely tie the stem to an upright stake.

DISEASE CONTROL

Use varieties that are disease resistant. Look for V, F, N (Verticillium, Fusarium, nematode) in their name. Improve drainage in heavy soils or use raised bed or large pots.

HARVEST

Pick when fully colored but firm, especially for canning, but just before using. The flavor is much fuller at room temperature. At the end of the season, gather any that have a tinge of pink. Store 1-2 layers deep in a box and keep at 50-60 degrees F. This way they will keep for 2-3 months.