

GROWING GUIDE FOR TOMATOES

Binomial Name:	Solanum lycopersicum
Varieties:	Marmande, Red Pear, Yellow, Pear, Wild Cherry, Red Brandywine, Yellow Brandywine, Big Yellow, Mexican Yellow Cherry, Golden Nugget, Orange Plum, Cour Di Bue, Aunt Ruby's German Green, Emerald Evergreen, Green Zebra, Amana Orange, Arkansas Traveler, Mortgage Lifter, Omar's Lebanese, Cherokee Purple, Gypsy, Goldman's Italian-American, Principe Borghese, Red Fig, Riesentraube, Sioux, Hillbilly or Flame, Pineapple, Tigerella, Cream Sausage, Great White, White Zebra, Plum Lemon, Roman Candle, Golden Jubilee, Pink Oxheart, Beefsteak, Roma, Rutgers, Emerald Apple, German Johnson, German Lunchbox, Thessaloniki, Jersey Giant, Purple Russian, Carbon, Big Rainbow, Striped Roman
Start:	Seeds or seedlings
Germination:	6 to 14 days, 20°C to 35°C
Seed Life (viability):	4-7 years
Soil:	Well drained
Sunlight:	Full sun
Sow Seeds:	45 - 90 cm apart
Transplant/Thin to:	45 - 90 cm apart
Ave. Days to Harvest:	60 to 85
Good Companions:	Asparagus, Basil, Beans, Borage, Carrots, Celery, Chicory, Endive, Garlic, Leeks, Lettuce, Mint, Parsley, Peppers, Radish, Spinach, Sweetcorn, Yarrow
Bad Companions:	Beetroot, Broccoli, Brussels Sprouts, Cauliflower, Dill, Fennel, Onion, Parsnip, Peas, Potatoes, Rosemary

Sowing & Planting:

Sow tomato seeds 1/2cm deep in seed trays about 6 - 8 weeks before the last frost is expected. As soon as the seedlings emerge, they need full sunlight to grow sturdy. Lack of sunlight causes the seedlings to grow "leggy".

Tip: To help your seedlings grow sturdy, place a small fan on low nearby. Or, lightly brush the tops of the plants with your hands a couple times each day.

Transplant when seedling is 20cm - 25cm tall and dark green with a stocky stem and a well-developed, healthy root system. Harden off your seedlings (place them outdoors for longer periods each day to help them adjust to the outdoors) before transplanting them. Once the night time temperatures are consistently above 10°C, place the seedlings outside for the entire day and night.

Tomatoes need lots of sun so you would need to select an area that receives full sun. Prepare the soil by adding compost since tomatoes prefer soil that is rich in organic matter.

Transplant seedlings about 45cm - 90cm apart (depending on whether it is a bush type or a vine type). If you plant the tomato plant deeply, you will encourage the growth of the roots. It is okay to cover the lower branches of your seedling as long as you allow the top four

branches to remain above the surface of the ground. To minimize transplant shock, avoid disturbing the roots.

Growing:

Determinate (bush) and Semi-Determinate (semi-bush) varieties will need to be staked. Place a stake or tomato cage next to each plant. As the tomato plant grows, secure it loosely with soft twine. Check the ties periodically as the plant grows and adjust them accordingly. If the tie becomes too restrictive, loosen it. Even better would be to use flexible ties or simply cut up strips of old pantyhose and use that instead.

In-Determinate (vine) varieties will need to be grown on a trellis and can sometimes grow to over 3 meters if left unchecked. Whilst it is not necessary to prune determinate (bush) types, it can be beneficial to do so with indeterminate (vining) types. Once the plant has reached a reasonable height (remember, you still need to harvest the fruit at the top), pinch out the growing tips to increase lateral growth. You also don't want the plant becoming too 'bushy' as this will restrict the airflow making the plant more susceptible to diseases. Prune by pinching out all the suckers that grow in the "crotch" of where the main branches meet the stem.

Keep your tomato plant well watered. Deep watering is preferable, over more frequent, light watering. You want moisture to go deep to all the roots of the plant. Water directly to the roots and keep water off the leaves if at all possible. Tomatoes that grow in wet, humid conditions are far more susceptible to plant diseases. Uniform watering is also the key to nice fruit. Even watering can prevent leaf-end roll, blossom end-rot and "cat-facing" - those misshapen crags and cracks on the stem end of the fruit.

Cold and hot spells will affect fruit development and growth. Fruit set will not occur below 12 degrees or above 32°C.

Harvesting:

For optimal flavour, tomatoes should be allowed to ripen fully on the vine but harvested before they begin to soften. Tomatoes store well in a cool, dry location. Do not put them in the refrigerator. While they last longer in the refrigerator, they will lose their flavour and texture. Keep them out of direct sunlight.

Just before the first frost, pick any remaining tomatoes while they are still green or orange. Wash them thoroughly. Rinse in a light solution of water and bleach (mix at 1 tablespoon of bleach to 4 litres of water). This kills off the bacteria that rot the fruit. Allow them to dry and then put them in a cool, dry, dark place. To ripen these tomatoes indoors, bring a couple at a time to a warm, sunny window.

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