



Tomatoes

Tomatoes are rich in vitamins A, B and C. There are varieties available that will produce fruit from early season to frost.

When you buy: Choose dark green, stocky plants with stems the thickness of a pencil.

Get a good start: Sow tomato seeds about 8 weeks prior to planting. Place about four or five seeds in each pot. Seeds need temperatures of about 24°C to germinate. Move the plants to a cooler environment, about 13 - 18°C when they have their second set of leaves.

Soil preparation: Tomatoes require well-drained soil. Adding peat moss and breaking up the top 10 - 12" of soil until it is crumbly aids drainage. To promote healthy growth of your tomato seedlings, work an all-purpose garden fertilizer into the soil.

Planting: Plants that have 5 - 7 leaves are ready to be transplanted outside. Set them where they will have 6-8 hours of sun daily. Delay planting them outside if there is any danger of

frost. Plant them in deep so that the soil surface comes level to the first set of leaves. Water the tomatoes immediately after planting.

Spacing: Staked - 1 ½ - 2 ½' apart; caged - 4' apart each way; free growing - 3 - 4' apart.

Watering & Fertilizing: Tomatoes need an even supply of water throughout the season. Uneven watering (leaving plant very dry then flooding) can precipitate blossom end rot and splitting of the fruit. Water early in the day to cut down on evaporation loss and to give plants plenty of time to dry out. Tomatoes respond the best when fertilized with a fertilizer specific for tomatoes. These fertilizers are low in nitrogen and more importantly, high in potassium. Careful to not overfeed, as limited fertilizing is often the key to success. If the lower leaves of the plant exhibit yellow veins that means the plant is magnesium-deficient: spray with a solution of Epsom sales (1 tbsp per 2 cups of water) which is rich in magnesium.



Pruning: Pinch back shoots and "suckers" that grow from the stem above a leaf branch. Pinched off suckers can be planted into pots to give you another crop of

tomatoes. Top-pinch the plant towards the end of the growing season will divert energy to the ripening tomatoes.

Harvesting & Storage: For the best taste, pick tomatoes when they are nearly or fully ripe. Pink tomatoes will ripen at room temperature. Placing tomatoes in the refrigerator will stop any ripening process. Large, green tomatoes will eventually ripen, but small, green tomatoes will never ripen. Never leave overripe fruit on the vine as it decreases productivity and may become a vehicle for spreading disease. Always protect unharvested fruit from frost.

Tomato Varieties

(Days to fruiting after plants are set out)

Early	50 - 65 days
Mid - Season	65 - 75 days
Late	80 - 90 days
Beefsteak (large)	80 - 90 days
Cherry (small)	65 days
Paste-type	75 - 80 days
Low acid	80 - 85 days

