

# Tomato Growing Tips

**T**omatoes are one of the most popular vegetable garden plants, and with good reason. Profuse bearers and easy to grow, they offer generous rewards for every gardener. Nothing compares to the taste of a tomato ripened on the vine. Commercially grown tomatoes are tasteless in comparison. Success is guaranteed if these basic requirements are met.

**SOIL:** Well-draining soil that is high in organic matter is best. If your soil tends to be heavy or sandy, dig in Sloat Loam Builder. Sloat Forest Mulch Plus, which contains 15% chicken manure is also a good choice. Incorporate Agricultural Lime to ensure a good supply of calcium. Calcium prevents blossom end rot and helps build strong cell walls.

**SUN:** Tomatoes require full sun. This is considered no less than 6 hours of direct sun per day. Plants will be weak and unhealthy with anything less. In cool areas, planting tomatoes against a sunny wall or fence will help in production and ripening of fruit. (We have listed some of the most reliable cool weather tomatoes at the bottom of this page. In general, they are varieties that ripen in 85 days or less.)

**PLANTING:** Make the planting hole extra deep. Plant the young tomatoes deep in the hole so that the first set of leaves is just above the soil level. Roots will form on the buried stem, creating a larger and stronger root

system. If you use tomato cages, be sure to put them in place before the plants get too large. Don't skimp on the size of the cage, tomatoes WILL outgrow smaller cages, eventually falling over and possibly breaking. A 1" x 1" stake that is 6 feet tall, driven firmly into the ground will also provide adequate support. Place it one foot from the base of the plant. Tie the plant onto the stake as it grows. Use ties that will not cut or chafe the stem of the plant. Water young plants deeply and frequently, tapering off as fruit develops. Never water tomatoes from above.

**FERTILIZER:** An All Purpose fertilizer or vegetable food should be applied every 2 weeks, beginning when blossoms first appear. Maxsea All Purpose or E.B. Stone Organic Tomato and Vegetable Food are good choices.

**PRUNING:** Pinch off the small leaves which appear in the crotch above a larger stem. Don't pinch off too many large leaves or the sun will burn developing fruit. Pinching back the top of the plant after it reaches the top of your stake or cage encourages more flowering and fruit.

**CONTAINERS:** Tomatoes can be grown in barrels or tubs very easily. Plant them in Sloat Organic Potting Soil and fertilize them as you would in the ground. Choose determinate (bush type) tomatoes that will require little or no staking. Cherry tomatoes can even be grown in hanging baskets, which makes harvesting a breeze!

## COOL CLIMATE VARIETIES:

Celebrity	Sweet 100
Cherokee Purple	Big Beef
Green Zebra	San Francisco Fog
Sungold	Stupice
Siletz	Early Girl
Black Krim	
Oregon Spring	

## HOT CLIMATE VARIETIES:

Brandywine	Beefsteak
Early Girl	Isis Candy
Celebrity	Abe Lincoln
Sweet 100	Berkeley Tie Dye
Roma	Ace
San Marzano	Sungold
Pineapple	Black Krim

*Note: Availability varies with the season*



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