



## *Tips for Growing Tomatoes*

Tomatoes are one of the most popular vegetables grown in home gardens. The cool days and nights of Cape Ann present some challenges, but with a little planning and good care of the plants, excellent results are achievable.

### **Key Points:**

#### Plant selection

- Many different varieties are available. See Bonnie Plant website <https://bonnieplants.com/growing/growing-tomatoes/> and check their excellent “Tomato Chooser” for a description of varieties, disease resistance and a good guide to plant selection at <https://bonnieplants.com/tomatoes/choose-your-tomato/> and to understand more see “Learn Tomato Terms” <https://bonnieplants.com/library/learn-tomato-growing-terms/> .
- Select healthy plants with a good root system. Be sure to select disease resistant varieties.

#### Planting

- Plant in location with at least 8 hours of sunlight (either for garden or pot).
- In the garden, tomatoes should be rotated to different areas of the garden each year.
- In the garden, plants should be at least 3 feet apart to allow for good air circulation, critical for preventing fungal disease.
- Pots should be 18-24 in diameter depending on variety of plant selected. Use premium potting soil. Pots need to have good drainage holes. See <https://bonnieplants.com/library/grow-tomatoes-pots/> for more information on growing tomatoes in pots.

#### Support

- Most plants should be supported with cages, trellis or stakes.

#### Watering

- Mulch 2-4 inches deep will help prevent plants from drying out.

- Garden plants should get 2 inches of water per week (soaker hoses or drip irrigation).
- Pots should be kept moist, and during hot weather will need to be watered 2-3 times per day.

### Feeding

- Plants in the garden should be fed approximately 6 weeks after planting. Tomato-tone Organic Fertilizer is a good choice.
- Pots will also need feeding every 4-6 weeks.

### Pests

- Most insects can be picked off plants by hand. Japanese beetles and tomato hornworm are the most common. If necessary, organic sprays are available for insect control.

### Disease

- Fungal disease can be a problem with foggy humid weather on Cape Ann.
- Prevention of fungal disease should begin in early to mid-July (before evidence of disease is present). This is best accomplished by using an organic fungicide based on *copper* or *Bacillus subtilis*, such as Bonide Copper Fungicide or Green Cure Organic Gardening Fungicide. DO NOT compost diseased foliage.
- See <https://savvygardening.com/tomato-plant-disease> for additional information.
- Trim yellow leaves and stems from the base of the plants and remove from garden.

### Pruning

- Pruning, or the removal of sucker shoots, can be done for indeterminate varieties of tomatoes grown on stakes. Determinate varieties and those grown in cages do not need to be pruned.
- Sucker removal is best done when the shoots are small by pinching off with fingers. Pruning tools need to be clean to avoid the spread of disease.
- Pruning is best done under dry conditions and in the morning. For more information see <https://bonnieplants.com/library/how-to-prune-tomatoes/>