



Advanced Tomato Growing

1. Optimal Time for Planting in Phoenix Zone 9b:
 - Spring, after last frost date (typically mid February)
 - Monsoon Season (early Fall)
2. Soil Health is Key
 - Build organic matter - compost, worm castings, mulch and feed regularly
 - Balanced nutrition:
 - Nutrient + Hydrolosate is the perfect blend of NPK for tomatoes
 - Worm Tea to stimulate root development and strengthen foliage
 - Calcium to prevent blossom-end rot
3. Choose Productive Varieties for our Climate
 - Hybrid vs. Heirlooms
 - Maturity dates under 90 days
 - Yellow skin vs. red skin
4. Watering (biggest mistake made)
 - In Phoenix we don't water by the clock- we water by depth. Deep roots, heavy mulch, and consistent irrigation equal more fruit and fewer problems.
 - Fluctuations are what cause catfacing, blossom end rot, fruit cracking and stress
 - Drip irrigation and a programmable timer are best
5. Pruning, Training & Trellising
 - Determinate vs. Indeterminate

- Prune foliage to increase airflow and remove suckers regularly to increase yield
- Single stem vs. multi-stem
- Twine Trellising, Florida Weave, and caging (how to use properly)
- Maximizing vertical growth in limited spaces

6. Pest & Disease Management

- Stressed plants won't set or hold fruit
- Stay ahead of pests (hornworms, whiteflies & spidermites are most common) - plant trap crops, deterrents, and increase airflow
- Encourage beneficial insects with companion flowers and herbs
- Fusarium & Wilt diseases can only be prevented, not treated (Hybrid, disease resistant varieties or grafted plants)
- Observe, observe, observe
- Sanitize tools frequently

7. Pollination Boosters

- Tomatoes self pollinate but heat stress reduces pollen viability
- Plant pollinator attractors- marigolds, nasturtiums, basil
- Gently shake flowers mid morning to vibrate blossoms and increase fruiting
- Pruning excess foliage gives pollinators easier access

8. Environmental Protection

- Shade cloth
- Frost cloth
- Birds
 - Physical barriers (nets, mesh or cages)
 - Fruit bags
 - Water
 - Reflective or sound deterrents
 - Sunflowers and native flowers nearby to distract

9. Harvest

- Quick ripening - cut back water
- Harvest at breaking stage, fruits are turning blush

