

Tomato Tips Tomato Tips



"Seeds for Life"

People who love to grow and eat tomatoes can sometimes become obsessive with trying new varieties, always searching for the best tasting ones. They aren't the easiest plants to grow, however. If you are a beginning gardener, the following tips might help.



Choose the type of tomato you like

The 6 general types of tomatoes are based on size and use:

CHERRY – tiny cherry-sized fruit, great in salads or right off the vine. Tasty treats.

SALAD – fruit are 5-8 cm in diameter, with a great flavour. Often determinate and early. Perfect for salads.

SLICER – big, round, juicy tomatoes that often have a superb flavour. Great for sandwiches.

BEEFSTEAK – huge, flattened, and dense tomatoes weighing up to a kg.

PASTE – cooking tomatoes, often plum or pear shaped. They have few seeds and are dense, with thin skins.

ALL PURPOSE – medium sized tomatoes that can be eaten fresh or used for sauces.

Know the plant's growth habit



Indeterminate: vining
"Undetermined how big"



Determinate: bush
"Determined to stay small"

Indeterminate plants will grow and produce until fall. Determinate plants stop growing and producing when they reach a certain size. The harvest of fruit from determinate plants lasts only a few weeks, while the harvest from indeterminate plants can extend from late July to the first frost in autumn.

Harden them off



Plants seeded indoors or in a greenhouse need to get used to bright sun, wind, and cold nights. Move plants outdoors during the day and bring them in at night. Increase the time they spend outdoors each day for 4-5 days, then leave them out at night if the lowest temperature will be above 10°C. Now they are ready to plant.

Plant in the sun, not shade



Production and fruit quality are better when plants have at least 6-8 hours of sun.

Give them support



Florida weave

Cage with stakes

Support indeterminate tomato plants by training them to grow up a pole or trellis, along a fence, in tomato cages, or woven between strings tied to stakes (Florida weave). Some varieties of indeterminate tomatoes can grow up to 3 metres tall and 2 metres wide. Plants this big really need a strong support system.

Grow them in pots too



Determinate tomatoes are well-suited for growing in containers. Use potting soil, not garden soil, and mix it with a dry organic fertilizer. You will need to water them daily when it is hot. Make sure your pot has a drainage hole in the bottom. Use a small cage or stake for support.

Mulch - the gardener's best friend



Put straw, wood chips, landscape fabric, or leaves around the base of the plants to retain moisture, inhibit weeds and pests, prevent diseases, and keep fruit clean.

Help prevent blossom-end rot



Inconsistent watering stresses the plants. Calcium stops moving into the growing tomatoes, causing tissue damage and rot on the bottom of the fruit. Adding calcium to the soil when planting may not help because our soils usually have lots of calcium. Make sure to keep the plants evenly moist. Drip irrigation on a timer and mulch works well. Some varieties, like roma types, are more prone to the condition than others.

Prune to maintain control



Sucker in crotch

Sucker removed

On indeterminate plants, suckers form in the crotches between the main stem and a leaf stem. The sucker will grow rapidly and become a stem, and more suckers will form along it. If suckers aren't pruned off, you could have a plant that is so dense that harvesting fruit in the centre is impossible. Pruning suckers is the main way to keep a plant going up a pole or trellis. Start pruning when a plant reaches about 60 cm tall or so. Don't prune determinate plants, as this will reduce the yield.

Creston Community Seed Bank Society

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Photos by N. Walser, J. Gilliland, and P. Huet

We respectfully acknowledge that our work takes place on the traditional and unceded territory of the Ktunaxa Nation.