

Growing Great Tomatoes

Heirloom vs. Hybrid

Heirlooms are older varieties. The seeds can be saved and will grow the identical plant next year. They are more susceptible to diseases.

Hybrids are a cross between two distinctly different

parents. The seeds cannot be saved. Most have higher disease resistance.

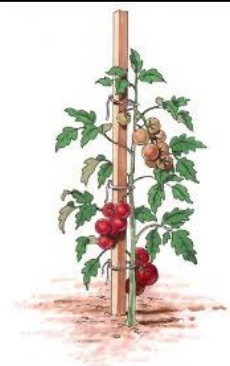
Indeterminate vs. Determinate

Indeterminate varieties continue growing all summer and require more space producing a large vine.

(Semi) Determinate varieties grow on a compact vines requiring less space in the garden. They are good selections for containers.

Tomato Gardening Tips

- Tomatoes need full sun—8 or more hours per day is best, 6 hours minimum
- Don't plant too early! Soil must be 55 °F at a depth of 4 inches. Mid-May is a good time.
- Tomatoes need good drainage. In heavy clay soil, create a raised bed.
- Remove all leaves below the first set of flowers to help prevent soil-borne leaf diseases. As the plant matures, remove leaves from the bottom 12–18 inches of the plant.
- Drip irrigation or bottom watering will help prevent disease. Avoid overhead watering to reduce diseases.
- Consistent watering at regular intervals helps prevent fruit cracking and blossom end rot.
- Use mulch to retain water, reduce soil temperatures and prevent soil-borne disease.
- Use stakes, cages, or trellises to provide support and keep the fruit off the ground.
- Tomatoes will stop producing fruit when temperatures drop below 50 °F or rise above 90 °F. When conditions improve, plants generally recover and will set fruit again.



Fertilizer— For best results, get a soil test to determine the fertility of your soil, and follow the recommendations of the test results. If you have not done a soil test:

For in-ground planting – Prior to planting, apply ½ cup of balanced fertilizer such as 10-10-10 to each 3 ft², or 1 lb./100 ft². of garden area and work into the soil. During the growing season, apply 2 tablespoons of the same fertilizer, per plant when the first fruit sets. Repeat every four weeks throughout the season.

For container planting – Use a water soluble fertilizer and follow the package directions.

Harvest and Storage

- Fruit harvested at the immature green stage has significant loss of flavor.
- Fruit at the “breaker” stage with a pale, radiating star shape on the bottom will retain most of its flavor.
- Blushing fruit, which is turning from green to pale orange/red, can be harvested with very little loss of flavor.
- Always ripen fruit above 55° F (such as on the kitchen counter).
- Fruit stored above 55° F will keep its full flavor.
- Fruit stored below 55° F (in the refrigerator) will lose flavor.

Grafted Tomatoes – Two different varieties are spliced together—a vigorous rootstock and a high-producing variety.

- Benefits
 - ◇ Helps with soil-borne disease prevention especially for heirloom varieties
 - ◇ Increased yields up to 40%

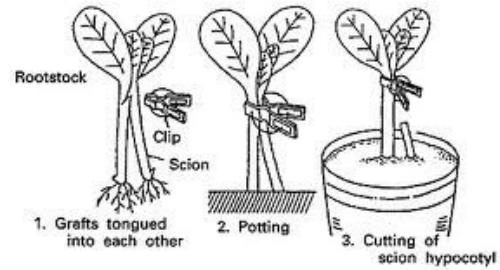


Photo courtesy hort.uconn.edu

Disease Resistance – This code indicates resistance to common disease or pest problems

- V – Verticillium Wilt
- F – Fusarium Wilt
- N – Nematodes
- TMV – Tobacco Mosaic Virus
- EB – Early Blight

Common fruit size

- Grape – smallest round or pear-shaped, about 1” in diameter
- Cherry – bigger than grape tomatoes, 1-2” in diameter
- Roma – Pear or plum-shaped fruit, usually used for sauce
- Standard – medium-sized, round, 5–14 oz.
- Beefsteak – large, round or odd-shaped, up to 1 lb.

New varieties with good flavor recently tested by K-State Research and Extension:

Grape / Cherry Type:

- Esterina (H, I)
- Juliet (H,I)
- Mountain Bell (H,D)
- Sun Gold (H,I)
- Suncherry (H,I)
- Sun Sugar (H,I)
- Supersweet 100 (H,I)
- Tumbling Tom (H,D)
- Sweet Olive (H,D)

Standard Silcers:

- Amelia (H)
- Beefy Boy (H,I)
- Big Beef (H,I)
- Carolina Gold (H,D)
- Celebrity (H, D)
- Chef’s Orange (H,I)
- Floralina (H)
- Florida 47 (H,D)
- Florida 91 (H,D)
- Jetsetter (H,I)
- Jet Star H,I)
- Mountain Fresh Plus
- Mountain Spring (H)
- Mountain Gold (D)
- Primo Red (H,D)
- Scarlet Red (H,D)
- Sun Leaper (H)
- Sunmaster (H)

Heirloom Silcers:

- Amana Orange (I)
- Black Krim (I)
- Cherokee Purple (I)
- Mortgage Lifter (I)

Roma / Plum Type:

- Little Napoli (H,D)
- Plum Crimson (H,D)
- Plum Dandy (H, I)
- Pony Express (H)
- Margherita (H,D)
- Roma (Heirloom, Semi D)
- Super Marzano (H,I)

Hybrid (H)

Determinate (D)

Indeterminate (I)

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