

GARDENING WITH TOMATOES

Tomatoes are a bright, colorful, and delicious way to take advantage of all that a garden has to offer. This is a quick guide to help you choose the right tomato for you and how to include them in your garden.

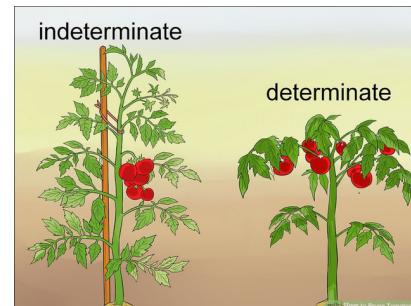
CHOOSING A TOMATO TYPE

Even though we only see a few types of tomatoes in the grocery stores, there are actually thousands to choose from. They come in different shapes, colors, and sizes and can be classified based on *how they grow* and *how their seeds are used* each year.

How they grow - Tomatoes can be either *determinate* or *indeterminate*.

Determinate - This means the plant grows to a certain size and then stops. Determinate tomatoes do not usually need support to grow.

Indeterminate - This means the plant keeps growing until it gets too cold. These plants take up a little more room, so if space is a factor think about choosing a determinate type. These plants will need support such as a stake or tomato tower.



How their seeds are used - Tomatoes can be either *heirloom* or *hybrid*

Heirloom - With heirloom tomatoes, the seeds are saved every year so that they can be planted again. Some have even been around since the 1800s! Heirloom tomatoes come in all different shapes, colors, and sizes.

Hybrid - These tomatoes are a cross between two different types of tomatoes. They have to be made each year and their seeds cannot be saved for the next season. Hybrid tomatoes are usually red and round.



Heirloom Tomatos



Hybrid Tomatos

PLANTING YOUR TOMATOES

When to plant - Tomatoes are a warm-loving fruit (yes, a fruit!) and should be planted outdoors after the last frost of the year has passed. In North Carolina, the best time to plant outdoors is early to mid May and harvesting happens from July to October. To get a head start, seedlings can be started indoors 6-8 weeks before the last frost by using a seed starting kit or any old small plastic container. Otherwise, tomato seedlings can be bought at your local gardening store. Just buy and plant!

Starting from seeds



Fill seed starter or similar container with soil (seed starting soil is best). Make two small holes in each compartment. Put a seed in each hole and cover with soil. Place in a warm, sunny spot inside. Water so that soil stays moist, but not soggy.



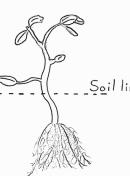
Once the seedlings have sprouted and are a few inches high, pick the strongest seedling and remove the other. After all danger of frost has past, it's time to move the plants outdoors!



If it is still too cold outside, but the plants begining to outgrow their containers, they can be transferred to small pots until it warms up.

Planting outdoors: if you don't have a designated garden all you need is a nice sunny spot and the following items:

- An old bucket with holes in the bottom
- Garden Soil or Manure
- A stake or tomato tower
- Tomato Plants
- Water



Planting your seedlings

1. If using a bucket: Fill the bucket with the soil or manure so that it is loosely packed.
2. In either a bucket or garden: dig a hole deep enough so that you can fill it in with soil above the roots and just under the first leaves. This insures that the plant will be properly supported.

Caring for your tomatoes

- Water regularly so that the soil stays moist, but not soggy.
- If there is an unexpected frost, cover the plant with an old sheet, but make sure it doesn't rest on the plant.
- If you chose an indeterminate type, make sure to use a support stake when the plant gets bigger.
- When the lower leaves begin to turn yellow (this is totally normal), remove them by simply pinching them off with your fingers.
- Once the tomatoes are about half green and half red (or other color if not red), they are ready to be harvested. Just let sit in a sunny window sill for a couple days until they ripen

COMMON TOMATO TYPES

BETTER BOY

This tomato produces large fruit and is a hybrid cross between beefsteak and red tomatoes. It is indeterminate and is one of the most popular tomatoes in the country.

JERSEY TOMATO

Jersey tomatoes are hybrid and determinate. They are bright red, round and have a juicy, balanced flavor.

CHEROKEE PURPLE

This heirloom tomato is indeterminate and produces large fruits that are reddish, purple, and green color. This line of seeds dates back to the early 1900s!

YELLOW PEAR

This indeterminate heirloom tomato is similar to cherry tomatoes and is very sweet!