



Dennis' 7 Dees

GROWING TOMATOES



Cherry Tomatoes: Sungold, Sun sugar, Chocolate Cherry, Isis Candy, Snow White, Golden Sweet

Beefsteak/Large Slicer Tomatoes: Brandywine, Mortgage Lifter, Pineapple, Amana Orange

Medium Slicer/Salad: Black Krim, Goliath | **Paste:** San Marzano, Roma | **Cold-Tolerant Early:** Bloody Butcher, Moskovich, Stupice

SUNLIGHT/TEMPERATURE



Tomato plants need full sun; at least 6-8 hours.

- If your garden gets less sun, try cherry tomato varieties.
- Ideal planting time is when soil temp reaches 60°F for several days and night temps average in the 50s (c. Mother's Day).

SOIL & PLANTING



In Containers

Premium organic potting mixes contain everything needed to successfully start tomatoes in containers.

- Use *G&B Organic Potting Soil* or *Baby Bu's Potting Soil*.
- Add worm castings and organic fertilizer for an added kick!
- For indeterminate varieties, use 15-gallon nursery containers (hold 2 cu. ft. potting soil) or larger.
- For determinate varieties (shorter plants), use 5-gallon nursery containers (hold almost 1 cu. ft. potting soil) or larger.

In Native Soil (Ground/Raised Beds)

Add 30–50% compost and other amendments to native soil.

- Use DIY compost (see below), *Harvest Supreme Soil Builder* (fortified with 15% chicken manure), *Malibu Compost*, or *G&B Soil Building Conditioner*.
- Soil amendments also become nutrients for microorganisms to feed on after decomposing.

The Perfect DIY Tomato Planting Recipe

Great for peppers, squash, and eggplant too!

Ingredients: ½ cup bone meal, ½ cup dolomite lime, ¼ cup organic veggie fertilizer, 1–2 handfuls worm castings, 1 shovelful *Harvest Supreme*

Instructions: Mix all ingredients in bottom of planting hole and incorporate with soil. Remove lowest few leaves from stem and plant tomato several inches deeper than current soil level to encourage larger root system.

WATERING



For in-ground tomato plants, deep watering at regular intervals is key (slow drip from hose for at least 20 minutes).

- Best time to water is when foliage droops in cool morning air. Drooping foliage during mid-morning or afternoon heat is not indicative of needing water. Count intervals between watering to determine your ideal interval.
- Watering frequency/duration varies based on growing conditions: container, in-ground, sun exposure, soil, etc.

FERTILIZING



Use granular/pelletized, organic, slow-release fertilizer for complete source of nutrition.

- *G&B Tomato, Vegetable & Herb Blend* contains 10% calcium to aid in fruit development.
- Apply fertilizer every 4–6 weeks; follow label instructions.
- Supplemental liquid feeding may be helpful as plants grow.

PESTS & DISEASE



Though tomatoes are pretty resilient to pests, there are still some common invaders: aphids, white flies, flea beetles, spider mites, little green worms (loopers).

- Spray with a fast jet of water or apply organic products.
- Use organic fertilizers with probiotics to maintain plant health, reduce environmental stress, reduce susceptibility to pests.

Most heirlooms have poor disease resistance (mid-season).

- Choose disease-resistant varieties for a sustained harvest.
- Prevent blossom-end rot (hard, dark patch at blossom end of fruit) by ensuring adequate calcium level in soil and steady, consistent moisture. Temperature is a major factor, but typically solved naturally when soil temps rise and calcium is released.

SUPPORT



A trellis, a cage, or stakes may be necessary to keep vines and tomatoes off the ground.

- Indeterminate plants (6–20+ feet long): need largest cage
- Determinate plants (smaller): medium cage is sufficient
- Stake the same day you plant! If you return a week later, you may damage new roots.
- Pruning is optional; can be done based on support system or as time allows; be careful not to remove too much foliage—delicate tomato fruits can sunburn!

FLAVOR



Plant nutrition greatly affects tomato taste! Stress like pests, disease, and weather can lead to “off flavors”.

- Avoid placing freshly harvested tomatoes in refrigerator; this destroys delicate flavor by turning sugars to starch.
- Tomatoes are best stored at temperatures above 50°F.
- Overwatering can lead to watery-tasting fruit; liquids dilute sugars in the plant's vascular system.
- Harvest fruit 24–48 hours after watering; allows more sugar to be stored in the fruit and trapped when harvested.