

Ramsbottom Horticultural Society

TOMATOES

Once known as the "apple of love" tomatoes have always been a popular crop for the amateur and professional gardener.

Sowing to harvesting time - 12 - 15 weeks depending on variety.

Once regarded almost solely as a greenhouse crop, with the development of new, hardier varieties you can now grow some varieties outdoors. However it is important to remember that the crop is native to a fairly hot dry climate.



High summer temperatures suit them perfectly, but since that weather cannot be expected every year in a temperate climate, some care must be taken to produce a good crop. They do not like damp, cloudy, cool conditions and they hate frost.

Most gardeners save growing time by starting tomato plants under glass, in a cold frame or on the windowsill ensuring frost free conditions. There is no doubt that the best way to grow toms is in a greenhouse.

Soil - Tomatoes will grow in any reasonably rich soil, or any poor soil providing the basic nutrients are added during the growing period. Growing soil should be replaced after every crop to prevent disease. Purpose made grow bags are ideal.

How to Grow Tomatoes.....

1. Sow seeds in a propagator or seed tray from late winter to early spring. Space the seeds 2cm apart.
 2. When the seedlings are large enough to handle, prick them off into 8cm+ pots filled with compost.
 3. When the plants are 12-15cm high, transplant them to permanent beds and tie to stakes.
 4. If growing single stem varieties, remove axil shoots with a clean knife to control the plants growth.
 5. Feed with liquid tomato feed as soon as the fruit begins to swell and repeat every two weeks until harvesting.
 6. If growing bush varieties, put dry straw on the ground under each plant to protect from damp soil and slugs.
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Pollination: Greenhouse tomatoes may need help with pollination. The pollen needs exactly the right atmospheric humidity to adhere to the female parts of the flowers and to grow down towards the ovule. The remedy is to spray the plants and surroundings in the early morning.

Sideshooting and Stopping: As soon as the flower trusses start to form the plant will begin to produce shoots in the joints between the stem and the leaf. By nature the tomato is a bushy plant, but allowing these shoots to grow will result in a mass of bushy foliage and small fruits. Remove sideshoots by "pinching out" using your thumb and forefinger. Repeat this every two days towards the end of the season. When the plant is bearing six or seven trusses of fruit break off the growing tip cleanly just above the second leaf above the top truss. The plant can then concentrate all of its resources into growing fruit.

De-leafing: Removing the lower leaves of the plant will encourage it to channel its resources into fruit production and improve ventilation close to the soil.

Feeding and Watering: Tomatoes need plenty of moisture but not a saturated soil. Twice daily watering is a must in hot weather. Greenhouse grown crops will benefit from a good misting by spraying the whole greenhouse including floor, staging etc.

Harvesting: The bottom trusses ripen first, pick the tomatoes before they are quite ripe. Sever the stalk at the "knuckle" just above the calyx. They can complete their ripening on a windowsill within a few days. Removing the crop before it's ripe helps the plant to concentrate on the next lot of fruit.

Interesting Tomato Facts.....



Tomatoes were first cultivated in Peru and Ecuador and the first extensive plantings were made in Mexico. Columbus brought both seeds and plants to Europe in 1498, they were grown for medicinal purposes and for decoration.



Books dating between 1597 and 1629 describe tomatoes as "apples of love" or "poma amoris". The name love apple was derived from the literal translation of the French name *pomme d' amour*, the fruit was believed to be a good aphrodisiac.



A good way to ripen off green tomatoes at the end of the season is to place a mature, aromatic banana or apple into a polythene bag with the tomatoes. Ethylene gas produced by the banana or apple will quickly turn your toms red.



Tomato plants account for one fifth of all vegetable plants purchased. They are so popular that they are grown in three-quarters of all domestic greenhouses in this country.

Tomato Varieties.....



Tomatoes Ailsa Craig

Good shape and medium-sized fruit produced.



Tomatoes Alicante

Red fruit which crops well.



Tomato Aviro F1 (formerly Orange Plum)

Medium sized, perfectly shaped, deliciously sweet fruit.



Tomato F1 Beefeater

Heavy crops produced.



Tomato : Berry F1 Hybrid

Cascading trusses of deliciously sweet, dark-red, strawberry-shaped fruits.



Tomatoes Big Beef

Has a strong growing habit.



Tomato Black Cherry

Tomato Black Cherry produces sweet juicy fruits in abundance throughout summer.

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Tomato Black Russian (Heritage)

Black Russian has a distinct complex flavour that has to be tasted to be believed.



Tomato : Brandywine (Heritage)

Cordon (Indeterminate). This variety dates back to 1885 and is regarded as one of the world's finest flavoured 'beefsteak' tomatoes.



Tomato Cherrola F1 Hybrid

Tomato Cherrola is suitable for growing outside.



Tomatoes Cherry Belle F1

Produces a good crop of tasty, cherry-type fruit.



Tomatoes Cossack F1

Disease resistant producing medium sized fruit.



Tomato Costoluto Fiorentino (T2)

Big, old-fashioned, misshapen, heavy, ribbed beef tomato from Florence.



Tomato Cristal F1 Hybrid

Firm, round, glossy scarlet-skinned fruits with ruby-red, dark flesh.



Tomatoes Cumulus F1

Crops well, medium sized fruit and resistant to disease.

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Tomato Cuor di Bue
Superb tasting and fleshy.



Tomato Falcorosso - Organic
Delicious, supermarket quality, larger cherry-sized, plum fruits fruits.



Tomatoes Fantasio F1
Bears a prolific crop that is superbly flavoured.



Tomato Floridity
Trusses with up to 35 fruits per cluster.



Tomatoes Gardener's Delight
Crops extremely well with fruit on long trusses.



Tomatoes Golden Peardrop
Delicious flavour and thin skinned.



Tomatoes Golden Sunrise
A delightfully flavoured, good shaped tomato.



Tomato Green Sausage (Heritage)
Elongated, green, sausage-like fruits with conspicuous yellow stripes.

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Tomatoes Incas F1

Can be picked early and excellent for soups and sauces.



Tomato Lilliput F1

Heavy cropper with small round tasty fruits.



Tomato Marglobe

'Perfect' tomato shape.



Tomato Marmande

Produces fruit with few seeds.



Tomatoes Moneymaker

Yields extremely well with medium-sized fruit.



Tomato F1 Nimbus

Crops producing early fruiting and lovely tasting fruits.



Tomato Pomona F1

Juicy eating tomato, ideal for use in salads.



Tomatoes Red Cap

Ideal for growing in pots.

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Tomato Red Pear Franchi
A very unusual beef tomato.



Tomato Roma
Traditional Italian Plum Tomato. Bolognese favourite.



Tomatoes Romana F1
Resistant to disease, ideal for glasshouse and outdoor growing.



Tomato San Marzano Redorta
Huge regional plum tomato for cooking and named after a mountain in Bergamo.



Tomato San Marzano 2
Classic Italian plum tomato.



Tomato F1 Shirley
Good quality and tasty fruit produced.



Tomatoes Sultana
Fruits of a nice with a lovely flavour.



Tomatoes Summer Sweet F1
A tall variety with deep coloured fruit.

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Tomatoes Sungold F1

Grows vigorously producing cherry-sized fruit.



Tomato F1 Sweet Love

Early ripening, producing healthy plants that become laden with fruit.



Tomato F1 Sweet Million

Crops very well and fruit keeps over a good period.



Tomato Tamina

A heavy cropping variety.



Tomato The Amateur

Crops well with a medium size fruit.



Tomato Tondo Giallo - Golden Boy

A round, yellow, hybrid tomato for eating.



Tomatoes Tornado F1

Produces continues crops of delicious tasty fruits.



Tomatoes Tumbler F1

High yields of delicious fruits produced in one season.

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Tomatoes Tumbling Tom Red

Excellent for hanging baskets and patio containers.



Tomatoes Tumbling Tom Yellow

Produces tumbling golden-yellow fruits.