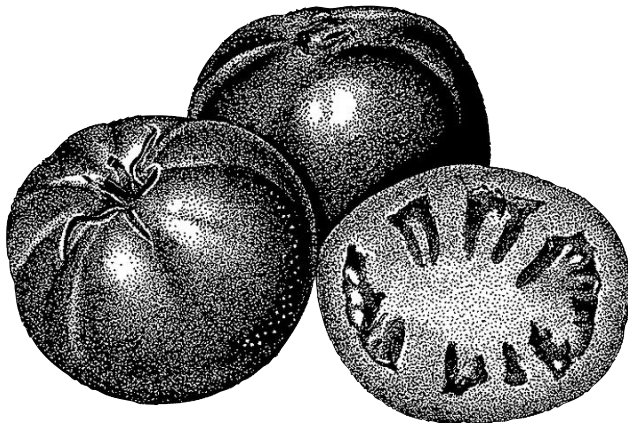


Growing Tomatoes

Why Grow Vegetables?

Vegetable gardening serves several important functions in addition to the obvious purpose of supplying fresh vegetables for the kitchen. Gardening is therapeutic and the satisfaction of working with the soil and creating a product of value is a relaxing way to spend what might otherwise be non-productive time. In addition, by carefully designing your vegetable garden, it can become an attractive and integral part of your landscape. Whatever the purpose, attention to a few basics will increase the satisfaction of your gardening endeavor.



Success with Tomatoes

Of all the crops grown by the home gardener, the tomato is number one in popularity. The choice of plants range from Heirloom (old fashion types not suitable for commercial growing) to modern hybrids resistant to Verticillium, Fusarium Wilt, Nematodes and Tobacco Mosaic. Fruits range from huge 1-2lb. 'Brandywine' to tiny "pea-size" 'Currant' and from deepest (almost-black) red through pink and rainbow striped to golden yellow and even green! The selection available is truly staggering.

Tomatoes are classified in two groups; *Determinate* and

Indeterminate.

Determinate plants tend to flower and set fruit which matures all at once. Plants do not continue to grow after the flush of flowers, therefore the plants tend to be stockier and rarely need staking. Some of these varieties are ideal for containers.

Indeterminate plants (vines) continue to flower, set fruit and grow throughout the growing season. These vines usually need to be staked or grown in a tomato cage. Most varieties for the home gardener are of this type.

Soil Preparation

Probably the most important aspect of vegetable gardening is the preparation and care of the soil, thus this basic element of gardening must be accomplished prior to planting. For ease in planting, to provide proper drainage and to encourage root crops to reach their full potential, every effort should be made to increase the tilth of the soil. This is done by turning organic material into the soil to a depth of 6-8 inches. **Master Nursery™ Pay Dirt** or **Master Nursery™ Bumper Crop**, at a rate of one bag each per 25 sq. ft., is recommended. Raised beds can be valuable where soil quality or drainage is a problem.

Planting

Tomatoes are easy-to-grow, requiring sun, well-drained, fertile soil and regular, deep irrigation. Planting can begin as soon as the danger of frost is past.

Planting is most often done by seedlings. Bury the stems of tomatoes deeply so that only two sets of leaves are above ground. This will encourage deep roots.

Watering

Tomatoes need deep, infrequent but regular watering. Erratic or over watering can cause problems such as fruit or flower drop and blossom end rot. A thorough soaking every 5-10 days is a good general watering guide.



Fertilizing

Vegetables are heavy feeders and therefore need above average quantities of plant nutrients. In general, tomatoes need fertilizing every 30 days during the growing season with **Master Nursery Tomato and Vegetable Fertilizer (5-10-10)** at a rate of 5 pounds per 100 sq. ft. or approx. 1/4 cup per plant. Be sure to water afterwards.

Blossom Drop & Pollination

Tomatoes are self pollinating (with the help of bees). Temperatures below 55°F can cause blossoms to drop. Other causes of blossom drop are extreme heat, too much water, shade and/or fertilizer (especially high nitrogen formulas).

Pest Control

Pest control in the vegetable garden should be carried out in a curative manner rather than in a preventative manner. This requires close surveillance to prevent an infestation from spreading.

Apply **Monterey™ Sluggo** to control snails and slugs. Safe to use in vegetable gardens.

Tomatoes may be attacked by sucking insects such as aphids and whitefly which can be controlled with **Master Nursery™ Pest Fighter Year Round Spray Oil** or **Safer™ Fruit and Vegetable Insect Spray**.

The other common enemy of tomatoes is the voracious Tomato Hornworm which can be controlled with **Safer™ Caterpillar Killer**, also known as "Bt".

Disease Control

Reduce the incidence of disease with these simple precautions:

1. Plant disease resistant varieties. Often labeled as VFN or VFNT
2. Rotate the area used for planting tomatoes, eggplants and peppers. They pass on the same soil borne diseases.
3. Avoid handling plants and never handle plants after smoking.
4. Don't overwater. Water at surface level, not overhead. Space irrigations 5-10 days apart depending upon weather condition and maturity of plants.
5. Remove seriously diseased plants from your garden and dispose, not in the compost pile!³²