



Tomatoes

Seed to Harvest Fact Sheet

Tomatoes are a delicious, juicy, warm season vegetable that comes in a wide variety of shapes, colors, and sizes. Tomatoes can be grown in containers, garden beds, or directly in the ground. With so many varieties of tomatoes available, you can easily find the best type to grow in your home!

Sunlight & Temperature

- Grows best with 6-8 hours of sunlight a day
- Plant when temperatures are regularly over 70 degrees
- Needs to have warm weather to grow properly
- When temperatures are high, day and night, flowers will not pollinate and will drop off plant; leading to a loss in production

Direct Seed or Transplant

- Start in pots for transplants February-April
- Seedlings will be ready to transplant after 6 weeks
- Be sure to take time to harden your seedlings 4-7 days before transplanting
- Space seedlings 18-24 inches away from each other
- Use cages or stakes to support the plant right after planting seedlings. It supports growth from an early age!

Watering

- Keep soil moisture levels consistent
- Water regularly, but not excessively
- Reduce water by as much as 50% as fruit begins to ripen to reduce cracking, rot, and to intensify the flavor. Tomatoes have more flavor when ripening fruit is deprived of water!
- Avoid watering the leaves and fruit of the tomato plant - getting water on the tomato can cause it to split

Common Pests & Control

- Hornworm: Feeds on blossoms, leaves and fruit
 - Signs: Chewed and defoliated leaves, piles of black droppings known as "frass"
 - Control: Hand pick hornworm off of plants

Photo by Abbi Marrs

Common Plant Viruses & Diseases

- Blight
 - Signs: Dark spots throughout the plant and fruit, with the spots feeling leathery on leaves
 - This disease is worsened by humidity, so avoid overhead irrigation



Maintenance

- Pinch off small side shoots in leaf axils before they are 6" long when necessary to reduce overcrowding
- Pinch all growth that goes more than a foot above it's supports so it doesn't shade out the rest of the plant
- Be sure to check that the tomato plant is well supported as it grows; add more support if needed!



Harvest

- Harvest Window: July-October, depending on variety
- Harvest tomatoes when they are full of color
- Ripe tomatoes can be stored at 55-70°F
- Place harvested immature tomatoes in shaded location to further ripen. Light is not necessary for ripening.



Recipes

You can find yummy tomato dishes on EatFresh.org!
Some include:

- [Black Bean, Corn, Tomato Salad](#)
- [Microwave Tomato Sauce](#)
- [Chicken and Rice](#)



Tomato Fun Fact

La Tomatina is an annual festival held in Buñol, Spain, where people throw over 100,000 tomatoes at each other for fun. Sounds super messy!

Thank you to the CalFresh Healthy Living, UC Garden Workgroup members who helped develop this material.

Sources

- <https://mgsantaclara.ucanr.edu/garden-help/vegetables/tomatoes/>
- <https://www.uaex.uada.edu/publications/PDF/FSA-6017.pdf>
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