

# Garden Tomatoes Made Easy

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Tomatoes are a must for any vegetable garden. They are versatile, delicious, colorful, and a pleasure to share with friends and neighbors. Best of all, each time you bite into a fresh-picked tomato your taste buds will dance.

Tomatoes are easy to grow, given the right care. This guide will help you understand the needs of most tomato plants. Did you know that there are around 4,000 different kinds of tomatoes out there? Have you ever sampled a Cherokee Purple, a Mr. Ugly, or a Candy Stripe? If not, try them. You will be in for a treat.



## Getting Started

- Variety Selection
  - Determinates Or Indeterminates?
    - Determinates will grow about waist high and be bushy.
    - Indeterminates will grow tall and need support to grow well. They are best grown in cages or on a trellis.
  - Resistance
    - Many varieties have resistance to disease. Ask for this information where you purchase plants.
  
- Purchase Healthy Plants
  - Plant selection is very important. Most Grainger County Tomato Farmers will have transplants to sell. Make sure the plants are green, and without disease or insects.



## Soil Preparation

- Soil Test
  - \$15.00 per sample for complete analyses
  - Test kits are available at your local Extension Office, and Co-Op.
- Soil pH
  - The pH is a measure of how acid or how basic the soil is. It is a scale of 1 to 14; 1 being acid and 14 being basic (alkaline). Tomatoes will grow with a pH range from 5.8 to 7, they will grow best near the 6.5 pH mark. Sulfur brings the pH down and Lime brings the pH up.
- Fertilization
  - A complete fertilizer (10-10-10, 15-15-15 or 6-12-12) should be put in the ground before transplanting or during planting. If a soil test has not been done, a general rule is to apply 2-1/2 to 3 pounds of a complete fertilizer, per 100 square feet of garden area. Never put fertilizer in direct contact with roots.

## Transplanting

- Transplanting
  - In worked ground, dig a hole double the size of the roots. Place tomato into hole, add a cup of water and cover roots.
- Spacing
  - Unstaked - 3 feet apart in rows 5 feet apart
  - Staked - 2 feet apart in rows 3 to 4 feet apart.
    - Add stakes if time allows.

### 3 to 4 weeks - (critical time)

- Fertilization
    - Good side-dress fertilizers
      - 20-20-20 (vine growth)
      - **Calcium Nitrate (prevents Blossom-End Rot) should be use the first time & a couple more times before fruit ripens.**
      - Potassium Nitrate (size & favor)
- All three are water soluble and can be added in drip line or beside the row and watered in.



Blossom-End Rot  
(Calcium Deficiency)

### Knee High Tomatoes

- Start applying Epsom Salts at 4 Tablespoons/per gallon of water
  - Can be sprayed on plant, on ground, or though drip.
  - Use every other week



Magnesium Deficiency  
Use Epsom Salt

### Disease & Insect Control

- Insect Control
  - Chemical
    - Sevin (liquid form) see label
    - Bonide Eight (if Sevin don't, work try Eight)
  - Organic
    - Bug zapper running all night
    - Neem Oil or other organic compounds
- Disease Control
  - Mancozeb 75 DF at 1.5 – 3 tablespoon/gallon of water
  - Chlorothalonil 54 F at 2 teaspoons/gal
  - Basic Copper (see label)



Colorado Potato Beetle

Check with your local Extension Office if there are any questions.