

TOP TOMATO TIPS



Popular varieties

The good news is that there are a huge range of varieties available - look for heirloom varieties

- ❖ Tommy toe, Tiny Tim, Black Cherry, yellow pearcherry tomatoes – prolific and less prone to disease
- ❖ Beefsteak – large rounded fruit
- ❖ Ox heart
- ❖ Roma
- ❖ Black Russian – juicy, purple flesh
- ❖ Black Krim
- ❖ Mortgage Lifter

Preparing the soil

- ❖ Pick a sunny spot, they need at least 6hrs sun/day
- ❖ Prepare the soil in advance, but don't overdo it! It makes tomatoes more resilient.
- ❖ Add compost and aged sheep or cow manure. A dusting of lime or gypsum will provide calcium, which will encourage strong, disease-resistant growth and prevent blossom-end rot on the fruit.
- ❖ Avoid too much nitrogen as you'll end up with lots of leaves and no fruit (that means no chook poo). You can add rock minerals.
- ❖ You can grow tomatoes in pots but need at least 25 litres of volume to ensure moisture retention

Staking

- ❖ Tomatoes need support
- ❖ Position stakes (1.8m high) before planting – tee pee, or upright stake
- ❖ Tie plant to stakes with soft ties like stockings, adjust as the plant grows

Planting

- ❖ Grow from seed in punnets then transplant, or buy seedlings
- ❖ Plant deeply - to ensure strong foundations. Tomatoes are fast-growing and have the ability to form roots up their stem. By planting them deeply into the soil - up to the first set of leaves - the existing roots will be insulated by the soil and will also form roots higher on the stem.
- ❖ Mulch around the plant, and don't dig around the tomato plant as they have surface roots.

Watering & Feeding

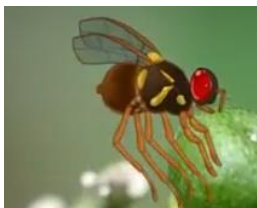
- ❖ Keep soil moist but not too wet
- ❖ Don't water the foliage - this will encourage rust
- ❖ Feed monthly with soluble food – low nitrogen, high phosphorous

Companion plants: Basil, marigolds, calendula, mint, dill, parsley, borage, garlic, stinging nettle

Crop rotation: Don't plant successive tomato (or other solanum vegetables including potatoes, eggplant) in the same spot; at least a 3-year gap

Preventing pests

- ❖ Exclusion: Nets (max 1.6mm holes)
- ❖ Traps: Fly traps (use a sweet liquid)
- ❖ Good hygiene: Pick up fallen or stung fruit – dispose in plastic bag in bin, not compost



Enjoy! Tomatoes ripened on the vine have the most flavour & well-developed nutrients

More on Companion plants

Plants recommended for companion planting with tomatoes include amaranth, asparagus, basil, bean, borage, calendula (pot marigold), carrots, celery, chive, cleome, cosmos, cucumber, garlic, lemon balm, lettuce, marigold, mint, nasturtium, onion, parsley, peas, sage, stinging nettle, sow thistle, and squash.

Amaranth helps repel insects.

Basil repels insects and disease, improves growth and flavour. Repels mosquitoes and flies (even fruit flies).

Borage improves growth and flavour and repels tomato worms.

Bee balm, chives, dill, mint, and parsley improve health and flavour. Use dill early since mature dill starts to inhibit tomato growth.

Carrots planted near tomatoes may not get as large as they should, but they will still taste good.

Garlic repels red spider mites. Garlic sprays help control late blight.

Stinging nettle nearby improves taste.