

Top Tips for Successful Tomatoes

Choose varieties wisely: pay attention to **Days to Maturity**, space considerations

Starting from seed: aim for late March or very early April; use new or sanitized containers and sterile seed starting mix. Bottom heat speeds and improves germination; use proper lighting, keep lights <4" from the tops of the plants.

Keep plants healthy:

Plant out around mid-May when soil and overnight temps are above 50°F. Soil can be pre-warmed with sheets of clear plastic for several weeks prior to planting.

Water evenly at the base of the plant, keep foliage dry, mulch around base.

Prune for better airflow: remove 8-12" of lower foliage and thin center if needed.

Scout plants regularly and remove any blemished foliage promptly. Treat plant preventively with fungicide if needed.

To enhance ripening:

In mid-late August remove flowers and fruits <1" from **large-fruited varieties**.

Gradually reduce watering to slightly stress plants, encourage ripening.

Harvest all fruit at first blush and in advance of rain, then allow to fully ripen indoors at room temp. Don't refrigerate, but you can freeze whole tomatoes to be used in place of canned tomatoes for soups, chilis, etc. (works best with paste-type tomatoes)

Seed saving:

Collect seed from fully ripe **open-pollinated** tomatoes. Seed saved from hybrid varieties will not grow true. Fermenting seed for about 3 days in a small cup of water reduces pathogens and enhances germination success.

End-of-Season chores:

Remove diseased plants right away (especially those with Late Blight). Remove all plant and mulching material from beds and do a soil test if warranted.