Bringing your tomatoes to harvest

**Keep plants healthy:**

Prune to improve airflow. Remove 8”-12” of leaves from bottom of plant and lightly thin out center and top of plant if overgrown.

Scout your plants regularly for diseased foliage and remove it promptly. Use preventive fungicides if needed.

Support heavy branches to avoid breakage.

**Encourage ripening:**

In late August, start removing flowers and growing points on plants. Remove small (1” or less) fruits on large-fruited varieties.

Gradually reduce watering to slightly stress the plants and encourage ripening.

Harvest all fruit at first blush and allow to fully ripen indoors. Harvest in advance of rain to reduce chance of splitting, especially for cherry tomatoes.

**Storage**

Always store at room temp, avoid refrigeration.

Whole tomatoes can be frozen (best for paste types) and used in place of canned tomatoes for soups, stews, etc.

**Garden hygiene/end of season chores**

Disinfect pruners and hands after working with diseased plants. Clean up plant debris promptly, and avoid home composting of diseased plants. Remove all mulching materials at end of season.

Consider doing a soil test and cover cropping tomato beds.

**Seed saving**

Collect seed from fully ripe open-pollinated tomatoes. Seed saved from hybrid varieties will not grow true. Fermenting seed for ~3 days reduces pathogens and enhances germination success.