

## HARVESTING AND STORAGE

- Pick when fully red or yellow and before the first frost.
- Select perfect fruits for storage in the fall.
  1. Pink ones will ripen at room temperature or can be stored a week at 55° to 65° F.
  2. Full-sized green tomatoes can be pickled or fried. Or, you can wrap them in paper when picked before frost and store them 3 to 6 weeks at 55° to 65° F. Leave stems on and check often. Throw out any that look bad. Move them to room temperature to ripen.
  3. Cherry tomato plants can be pulled up and hung in a cool place to ripen the fruit. Pick as needed.
- Store fully ripe tomatoes in the refrigerator.

## INSECTS AND DISEASE

- Protect young plants from cutworms by wrapping the stem with newspaper or by paper collars buried 1 inch in the soil. Or, use an insecticide when planting.
- Plant disease-resistant varieties where possible.
- If insects or disease become a problem, see Extension Bulletin E-760(b) or your County Extension Agent for the recommended pesticide to use.



### KEYS TO SUCCESS

- Plant recommended varieties.
- Transplant after danger of frost.
- Plant in sunny location.

Other bulletins in this series provide additional information on vegetable gardening.

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COOPERATIVE EXTENSION SERVICE  
MICHIGAN STATE UNIVERSITY

## family Vegetable Garden series

EXTENSION BULLETIN E-824 (18)

# Tomatoes

by Elizabeth C. Naegele and J. Lee Taylor  
Michigan State University

## mm mm GOOD!

Tomatoes are the most popular garden vegetable! They are easy to grow, produce a lot of fruit and are rich in vitamins A, B and C. They can be used fresh or cooked, in salads or sauces, or canned or frozen. The fruits are attractive, so plant them where they can be seen and enjoyed.



### RECOMMENDED VARIETIES Days from transplanting to harvest in ( )

Early: • New Yorker (64)  
• Springset (67)  
• Red Pak (71)

Yellow: Golden Boy (78)  
+ Sunray (83)

Mid-season: • Setmore (71)  
• Jetstar (72)  
• Campbell (73)  
• Heinz 1350 (75)  
• Roma (76) for paste

Small-fruited: (suitable for container gardening) • Pixie (52)  
• Presto (60)  
• Small Fry (68)  
• Yellow Pear (70)

Late: • San Marzano (78) for paste  
• Supersonic (79)  
• Burpee (80)  
+ Manalucie (86)

• resistant to verticillium and fusarium wilt diseases  
◦ only resistant to verticillium  
+ only resistant to fusarium

## START EARLY

Tomatoes take a long time to grow, so buy transplants or start them early indoors (see No. 15 in this series: Starting Plants at Home). You'll probably get better plants if you buy them.



THIS!

If you buy transplants:

- Choose dark-green, stocky plants 6 to 10 inches tall with stems the thickness of a pencil.
- Don't buy tall, spindly plants or those with spots or yellow or curling leaves.
- Avoid plants with flowers or fruit on them.

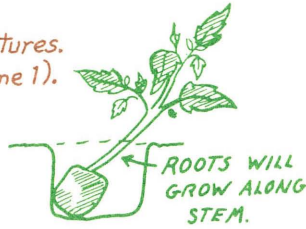


NOT THIS!

## TRANSPLANTING

Tomatoes cannot withstand cold temperatures.  
Plant after the last frost (May 20-June 1).

1. Set plants 1 inch deeper than they were in containers. If tall and leggy, set deeper and on a slant.
2. Water well, preferably with a starter fertilizer solution.
3. If there are frost warnings, the small plants can be covered at night with boxes, milk cartons, etc. Remove covers during the day when it's warmer.



## BASICS

Tomatoes need full sun for high yields!

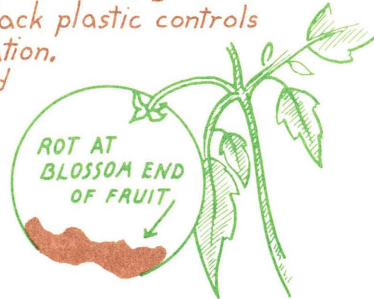


**soil:** Plant in well-drained soil.

**fertilizer:** Before planting, mix in 2 pounds (4 cups) of 5-20-20 fertilizer per 100 square feet of soil. Sprinkle a high nitrogen fertilizer 4 inches from plants after fruits begin to form.

**weeding:** Mulching with a 3 to 5 inch layer of leaves, grass clippings or straw or a sheet of black plastic controls weeds with less work than cultivation. Mulching also keeps soil moist and fruits clean.

**water:** Provide plenty of water. You can help prevent blossom end rot by keeping the soil evenly moist.



## VARIETIES



- There are tomatoes for fresh eating and for paste as well as cherry-sized ones, and red and yellow colors.

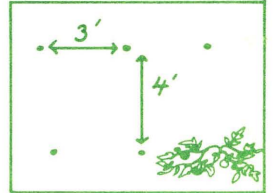
- Plant an early variety for early harvest. The midseason and late varieties taste better, so save most of your space for them.

## TRAINING TOMATOES

If you let tomatoes grow naturally along the ground they are less work and produce more fruit. However, plants grown in cages or on stakes produce cleaner fruit and make harvesting easier. More plants can be grown in a limited space if they are trained.

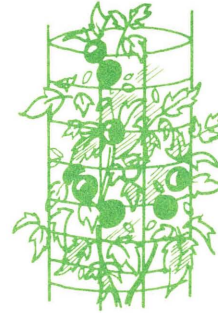
### On ground

To keep fruits from rotting on ground, spread a mulch (see p. 2) around plants. Set plants 3 feet apart in rows 4 feet apart.



### Caged

This is less work than staking, and yields are greater.



1. To make a cage, take a 6 x 5 foot section of 6 x 6 inch or 8 x 8 inch mesh wire. (Concrete reinforcement wire works well.)
2. Roll into a cylinder and hook ends together.
3. Remove bottom rung to make prongs that you can push into soil around plants.
4. Let plants grow up inside the cage.
5. Set plants 2 to 3 feet apart with 5 feet between rows.

### Staking

This is more work than caging, but requires less space to store stakes over winter.

1. Set 6-foot stakes 10 inches deep in the soil, about 3 inches from the plant's base.
2. As the plant grows, tie stem loosely to the stake every 12 inches with pieces of cord or cloth.
3. Remove side shoots so there is one main stem.
4. Set plants 2 to 3 feet apart with 3 feet between rows.



Remove stakes and cages at the end of the season and save for next year.

## CONTAINERS

Grow tomatoes in containers if you don't have much space (see No. 12 in this series: Space Saving Ideas).

