



# Tomatoes

## Crow Wing County Master Gardeners *Giving Gardens* Guide to Tomatoes

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### DESCRIPTION

Tomatoes, botanically a fruit, but are most commonly thought of as a vegetable by nutritionists and the general public. Originated in Central and South America and became one of the most popular garden crops in the US. They are rich in Vitamins C, A, K, fiber, antioxidant protection and a medium sized tomato has only 35 calories.

### PLANT SITE REQUIREMENTS

Sun	Six to eight hours of sun daily
Soil	Medium-textured, well-drained, weed-free soil with a pH of 6.5 to 6.8
Soil Temp	At least 50 degrees (keep in mind that soil temperature and air temperature are two different things!)
Placement	Member of the nightshade family and should not be planted in an area where other nightshade plants such as potatoes, eggplant, and peppers were planted in the previous three to four years.

### PLANT SELECTION

Type	Characteristics	Usage
Cherry/Grape	Sweet	Snacking/Salads
Heirloom	Longer to mature	Slicing
Roma	Less juice	Salsa/canning

Determinate – most tomatoes fall in this category. They grow to a pre-determined height and set one large flush of fruit over a two week period.

Indeterminate - continue to grow all season, developing long vines that need to be supported and continue producing fruit until killed by frost.

Days to Maturity - calculated once the tomato plant is planted in the garden. Zone 3b has 115 growing days on average, so early maturing varieties will mature within that time frame.

Disease Resistance - varies among varieties and should be researched and considered when selecting the type of tomato to grow.

### PLANTING RECOMMENDATIONS

- Don't plant on a hot, windy, day. Late afternoon works well
- Set plants slightly deeper than they were in the container
- Pinch off leaves of tall, lanky plants - consider "trench planting" for tall plants
- Provide a collar to protect from cutworms
- Provide shade if possible. Water the roots and check again at the end of the day

## **MAINTENANCE**

Watering - tomatoes need one to two inches of water per week. Do not overhead water as this will cause soil to splash on the leaves and encourages the development of early blight. Drip irrigation is best.

Fertilization - tomatoes are heavy feeders so use fertilizer that is low in nitrogen, high in phosphorus, and medium to high in potassium. Apply to area before planting, when fruit first sets, and every two weeks thereafter.

Temperature Requirements - tomatoes are warm season plants and thus are sensitive to temperature fluctuations. Warm days with cool nights below 55 degrees, warm days above 90 degrees or warm nights above 75 degrees may cause problems such as “cat-face” or yellow shoulders.

Pollination - each tomato flower contains both the male and female parts so they are self-pollinating. Excessive humidity or dry conditions interfere with pollination.

Diseases - do not work in the garden when the plants are wet as this will encourage transfer of any existing disease from one plant to another. Check plants frequently for problems.

Questions or Problems - go to <http://www.extension.umn.edu/yard-and-garden> and search for “Disorders of Tomato” – “What Insect is this?” – “What’s wrong with my Plant?” – “Is this Plant a Weed?”

### *Garden Fresh Tomatoes*

#### Instructions:

8 firm, ripe, sliced tomatoes arranged in a flat serving dish.

Marinade: 1 clove crushed garlic; ½ cup salad oil; ½ cup chopped parsley; ½ teaspoon pepper; ¼ cup tarragon vinegar; 2 teaspoons sugar; 4 heaping teaspoons prepared (yellow) mustard – do not substitute; 2 teaspoons salt.

### *Roasted Tomato Bruschetta*

Cut cherry tomatoes in half, toss with salt, pepper, olive oil, and chopped herbs of choice.

Roast in 400 degree oven until tomatoes start to brown. Stir occasionally. Remove from oven and serve with goat cheese and toasted French bread slices.