

How to Grow Your Own Tomatoes

Tomatoes are incredibly popular crops for gardeners. There are many varieties to try, from baby cherry tomatoes to huge fleshy beefsteaks. You can grow traditional tall cordon tomatoes, compact bush varieties or trailing types that suit hanging baskets.

Despite their popularity, tomatoes are not the easiest crop to grow. They need a regular watering schedule and quite a bit of care. But the taste of freshly picked tomatoes makes it all worthwhile! They grow and ripen best in a greenhouse, but you can grow them outdoors too.

Sowing

- Sow thinly in shallow pots or seed trays onto seed compost. Cover with a thin layer of compost
- Keep the compost moist. When seedlings have two true leaves, prick out to 9cm peat pots filled with seed compost
- Alternatively, sow a few seeds in 9cm peat pots filled with seed compost. Keep moist and remove the weaker seedling
- Water regularly to keep the compost evenly moist but without waterlogging

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Sow	•	•	•									
Harvest							•	•	•	•		

How to look after me

Soil: Very rich, well-drained

Position: Sunny, sheltered

Location: Greenhouse, container, outdoors

Growing (outdoors)

- When the flowers of the first truss (fruiting stem that will bear the tomatoes) open, plant out to the final growing position
- For outdoor growing, plants will need to be acclimatised gradually – take the pots outside during the day and bring back in at night
- After a few weeks, plant out into final positions on very well-prepared soil. Space the plants 45 – 60cm apart
- Follow other growing instructions for indoor tomatoes below

Did You Know?

The fruit of the tomato was once thought to be an aphrodisiac and was given the name 'love apple'

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Growing (greenhouse)

- When the flowers of the first truss open, plant out to the final growing position
- For greenhouse growing, put two plants in a growing bag or one per 23cm pot
- Cordon varieties will need to be loosely tied to an upright bamboo cane as they grow. Bush and trailing varieties do not need support
- Remove any sideshoots on cordon varieties when they reach 2-3cm long
- Keep evenly watered and apply a balanced liquid fertiliser to the plants every 10-14 days until the first fruits start to set
- When the fruits appear, switch to a potassium-rich tomato liquid fertiliser and apply it every time you water
- Tomato plants in growing bags may need watering every day
- Once the plants reach the top of the greenhouse or have set seven separate trusses, or four trusses for outdoor plants, remove the growing tip of the main stem, at the point two leaves above the top truss
- When growing tomatoes indoors or under cover, it's very important to adequately ventilate the plants by regularly opening doors and windows



David's Top Tip

Many of the problems with growing tomatoes come from irregular watering. Letting the soil dry out and then flooding it with water can cause fruits to swell, splitting the skin. Avoid this by sticking to a regular watering schedule.

Harvesting

- Start to harvest once the fruit is ripe and fully coloured
- At the end of the growing season, remove any stems with unripe fruits and place in a drawer with a banana. This helps to ripen them because bananas give off a ripening gas called ethylene