

# Bringing your tomatoes to harvest

## Priority 1: Keep plants healthy

Always water at the base of the plant and keep foliage dry.

Prune for better airflow. Remove 8"-12" of leaves from bottom of plant and thin out center and top of plant if overgrown.

Scout plants regularly for blemished foliage and remove it right away. Use preventive fungicides if needed.

## Priority 2: Tips to enhance ripening

In mid-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 the fruits to ripen.

Harvest all fruit at first blush and allow to fully ripen indoors. Never refrigerate, but whole tomatoes can be frozen to use in place of canned tomatoes in soup, chili, 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 reduces pathogens and enhances germination. Squeeze seeds and juice into a cup, add a small amount of water, and let sit for several days. Remove any mold that forms, rinse seeds in a fine mesh strainer, and label/let dry in coffee filters.

## End of season chores

Remove any diseased plants right away, especially if affected by Late Blight. Practice good garden hygiene and sanitize hands and pruners to keep disease from spreading.

Remove all plant and mulching material from garden beds.

Do a soil test if warranted, and plant cover crop to protect and improve the soil.

Record your observations of which varieties performed well.