

Top tips for successful tomatoes

Choose varieties wisely: pay attention to Days to Maturity, space considerations

Keep plants healthy:

Plant out around mid-May when soil and overnight temps are above 50°F.

Water at the base of the plant, keep foliage dry, and mulch around plant.

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

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

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 ripening.

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 success.

End-of-season chores

Remove diseased plants right away (especially those with Late Blight) and practice good garden hygiene, sanitize hands and tools to keep disease from spreading.

Remove all plant and mulching material from beds and do a soil test if warranted.