



Tomato Planting Guide

About Tomatoes

Tomatoes are the epitome of juicy, refreshing summer vegetables...or fruits? Contrary to belief, tomatoes are biologically a fruit, but classified botanically as a vegetable for its common appearance in dinner cuisines over dessert,

When to Plant

Start seeds indoors about 6-8 weeks before the last expected spring frost, transplanting seedlings outdoors about 2 weeks later.

Where to Plant

It is best to start seeds in a growing tray indoors, keeping them at a warm room temperature, preferably in a sunny window sill. When transplanting to your outdoor garden, be sure your garden temperature is at least 70 degrees F. Choose a sunny spot with well-drained soil and enough space to avoid over-crowding,

How to Plant

Fill your growing trays with moist seed starting mix and plant the seeds 1/4" deep. Place germination containers out of direct sunlight in a warm location. It only takes 5-10 days for tomato seeds to germinate if they are kept in their optimum temperature range of 70-80 degrees F. Cover the germination containers with a plastic bag or sheet of plastic. This will help preserve moisture, but you must ensure that air can circulate and the mix does not dry out. When seedlings emerge, move them into bright light.-- fluorescent shop lights kept inches above the leaves will be best, as tomato seedlings require 16-18 hours of light per day.

Caring for Tomatoes

Water your seedlings by soaking the mix, then let it get nearly dry before the next watering. After seedlings develop their first set of true leaves, transplant the plants into their own, approximately 4", well-draining container. Be sure to plant them all the way up to their top leaves as tomatoes are able to develop roots all along their stems. Before moving plants outdoors, cover planting area with plastic 2 weeks before, warming the soil to allow earlier tomato production. Transplant 1-2 weeks after the average last frost, hardening off the plants to avoid shock. Keep plants covered during inclement weather and remove the covers on moderate days. Tomatoes should be transplanted deeply. 50-75% of the plant should be buried. Space the plants 18-36". Each plant will need about a gallon of warm water (80 degrees F) within 10 minutes of transplanting. In the first 7-10 days, give each plant about 16 ounces of water every day, slowing down to about 2-3 times a week with just 1-3" of water each time. Mulch your tomato plants a week or 2 after transplanting. Your mulch should be about 1" thick, surrounding each plant stem by at least a 12" circle. Harvest either using shears or gently twist off each tomato when they are at the peak of maturity.