

BUCHANAN'S

NATIVE PLANTS

Spring Tomato Gardening: FAQ

Q. When should I plant my spring tomatoes?

A. Plant seeds indoors from November to February. Plant transplants when the air and ground temperature is consistently above 60 degrees.

The ideal time you plant depends on where you live. You should wait for the later dates if you live in cooler areas (i.e. The Woodlands). You can plant during the earlier dates if you live in a warmer part of Harris County (i.e. The Heights). While the temperatures warm up, you can bump up your 4" tomatoes into a 1 gallon container to get the root systems established. You would want to move it inside during chilly days below 50 degrees to protect the foliage from any damage.

Q. Do tomatoes need full sun?

A. Yes. Tomatoes need a minimum of 8 hours of direct sun per day if not full sun, to stay healthy and productive.

Q. What is the difference between "determinate" and "indeterminate" tomato varieties?

A. Determinate (or bush) tomatoes grow to a specific size, usually 3-5 feet. All the fruit on determinate varieties are ready to be harvested around the same time. Determinate tomatoes produce over a short period of time.

Indeterminate varieties keep growing and vining until they are pulled up or die. They can grow from 6-12 feet tall so they need strong support. The fruit on indeterminate varieties produce and ripen throughout the spring season until night time temperatures get above 75 degrees. At which time, the pollen in the flowers becomes unable to produce.

Q. What does it mean when the label says, "135 days"?

A. That's the "days-to-maturity". It means the number of days from transplanting the seedlings into the garden until the first appearance of mature fruit. That said, these are only general guidelines. All kinds of cultural factors will impact the actual number of days to maturity. Weather is the biggest influence. Cold weather can cause seedlings to slow their growth and perhaps even stunt it.

Q. What is the difference between "heirloom" and "hybrid" tomatoes?

A. Hybrid tomatoes are cross bred from two or more different plants for a particular purpose (disease resistance, color, shape, etc.). The seeds from the tomatoes you grow will not produce tomatoes with the same characteristics as the original seeds.

Heirlooms are open-pollinated and the seeds have been handed down through generation of growers. The varieties are at least 50 years old. They are valued for their taste, unusual markings, color and shape. The tomatoes you grow from saved seed will replicate the original plant.

Q. What does “disease resistance” mean?

A. The ability of a plant to withstand attack from fungal, viral and bacterial diseases is called disease resistance. Common disease resistances are to verticillium wilt (V), fusarium wilt (F), and nematode (N).

Q. What are companion plants for tomatoes?

A. A few companion plants fitted for tomatoes would be marigolds to reduce insect pressure, basil to increase tomato flavor, and borage to repel the tomato hornworm, aiding any plants it is interplanted with by increasing resistance to pests and disease. The most important companion plant for your tomatoes are going to be flowering plants that attract pollinators!

Q: What type of soil do my tomatoes need to be planted in?

A: The tomatoes need a fertile soil with a high level of organic material such as compost and a well-draining soil.

Q: What type of fertilizer do tomatoes need?

A: Tomatoes need a high phosphorus fertilizer as do most vegetables in general, this is what helps produce the fruit. Try to avoid high nitrogen fertilizers because it will produce a very healthy green plant but fewer fruits. A few recommended products that we carry here at Buchanan’s Native Plants would be:

Medina Hasta Grow: This one is very universal and compatible for all vegetables as well as flowering plants.

Fox farm Happy Frog Tomato and Vegetable