



Harpers

NURSERIES & FLOWER SHOPS

A Recipe for success:

How to Grow Great Tomatoes

WHERE: Tomatoes, like most vegetables should be placed in a bright sunny location, far away from large hedge plants or trees whose roots would likely end up competing with the smaller tomato plants, robbing them of the nutrients and moisture they need. In a contest like this, I can assure you, the large shrubs and trees will always win.

SOIL: The soil in your garden is of ultimate importance. It has to have enough organic matter to hold moisture and nutrients without leaching away quickly. However, the soil also needs to be loose enough to allow for good aeration and drainage which will prompt strong root development.

Perfect soil is rare. Therefore, it is often necessary to amend the soil with Omni, Kellogs Gromulch, or Watermiser organic compost. For best results, a soil pH in the range of 6.5 to 7.0 is just about perfect. If the pH of the soil needs to be adjusted, we suggest you add Gypsum or Soil Sulphur to reduce soil alkalinity and lower the pH.

PLANT SELECTION: We suggest you select disease resistant varieties. The type, size and color is up to you. We sell varieties that have been proven to do well in our climate. If you choose to raise your own plants from seed, you need to start the seed early, in a seed flat and then transplant and grow to a size suitable for bedding, do not direct seed into the garden. We can help you with this project, ask us.

When you select your transplants, choose the tallest, most sturdy plants you can find. Tomatoes can be planted deeper in the soil because they will root up the stem and make the plant deeper rooted, pinch off the lower leaves and set up to 5" deep.

If cut worms are a problem, make a collar out of cardboard 3" to 4" wide, set this around the plant 2" from the stem and 1" into the soil. This will keep the cut worms away until the plant is well started.

Some tomatoes do not need to be staked or caged, some do, ask us how the varieties you have selected grow, spacing also varies with variety, ask us.

As soon as you have planted your tomatoes, water them in slow and deep to soak the plant and settle the soil, after the water has soaked in, water each plant with a pint of diluted water soluble 20-20-20 fertilizer. Then scatter 1/4 cup of 10-10-10 granular fertilizer 2" to 3" away from the stem around each plant, and water the plants again.

As the season progresses, follow this two part feeding schedule:

Part 1: 30 days after planting, apply 1/2 cup of 10-10-10 granular fertilizer around each plant, out and beyond the branch spread.

30 days later, repeat this application with 3/4 cup of 10-10-10. Stay 6" away from the stem, apply out to and beyond the branch spread, all around the plant and water in.

Part 2: In addition to the applications of the granular 10-10-10, we suggest applying water soluble 20-20-20 fertilizer 3 times each month for as long as you grow the crop, on the schedule listed below:

The 20-20-20 is dissolved in water at the rate of 1 teaspoon per gallon.

First month: one pint of 20-20-20 per plant. Do this every 10 days.

Second month: one quart of 20-20-20 per plant. Do this every 10 days.

Third month: 1 1/2 quarts of 20-20-20 per plant. Do this every 10 days.

Fourth month: 2 quarts of 20-20-20 per plant. Do this every 10 days.

*Each month you will be using the 10-10-10 granular and 20-20-20 water soluble until the crop has finished. From the 4th month on, you will use 3/4 cup of 10-10-10 granular and 2 quarts of water soluble 20-20-20 each month, at the above schedule.

Remember Tomatoes like ample moisture. Water slow and deep, so that plants do not stress for moisture. Apply water long enough to wet soil to a depth of 24", the soil should be wet well beyond the spread of the plant.