



The Plant Professionals

FALL TOMATOES

444, Celebrity, Carnival, Jackpot, Phoenix, Solar Fire, Sunmaster, Surefire, and Tycoon are all good medium sized tomato varieties. Beefmaster and Betterboy are good larger varieties, but are slower to mature and so are chancier for fall planting. Small fry, Cherry Large, Santa Grape, and Sweet 100 are smaller tomatoes that produce prolifically. Patio is a 2" diameter tomato bred for growing in pots.

Prepare planting beds by working 2"- 4" of Back to Nature Compost into the bed. Addition of sharp sand and manure is also beneficial.

Tomato Plants should be set out in August to insure maturity and harvest before freezing temperatures. Transplants should be protected from excessive heat the first two weeks after transplanting by shading from the south and west sun with cardboard, a shingle stuck into the ground, or whatever. Alternatively, transplants can be potted in cut down plastic soft drink bottles or 1-gallon nursery buckets for growing until weather is cooler.

Transplants should be set 36" apart, with roots covered by no more than 2" of soil; extra leggy plants can be laid sideways in a shallow trench to cover excess stem. A newspaper collar or plastic container with bottom removed can protect the stem at ground level where it might be chewed by cutworms. Water in transplants with Greenlight Root stimulator mixed to directions. Tomato and Vegetable Food or Espoma Plant Tone applied 2 weeks after transplanting will promote lush, healthy growth and good fruiting.

Growing plants will need support by caging or staking. Be sure stakes or cages are large enough and securely anchored. Plants should be mulched with Back to Nature Compost or shredded pine bark after planting. Water deeply and regularly, never allowing soil to become completely dry.

Insects and diseases are more easily prevented than cured. Weekly application of Seaweed or Insecticidal Soap will stop that #1 nemesis, the spider mite. A Fungicide prevents most common tomato diseases, and Thuricide eliminates pesky caterpillars. The best possible disease and pest control method is to exclude these pests with a filmy row crop cover such as Gro-Web. A protective envelope of Gro-Web stretched over your tomato cage and the bottom edge covered with earth will prevent those plant munching, disease spreading pests from ever reaching your plants or fruit, but it allows water and sunlight to flow through, and no chemical sprays necessary.