

TOMATO TIPS

Tomatoes are a summer favorite of many vegetable gardeners in the Northeast. They were first cultivated by indigenous groups in close proximity to the equator, which means that they require lots of sunlight and a consistent water source. Check out the information below to learn more!

TYPES OF TOMATOES

Consider choosing the types of tomatoes that you grow based on how you would like to use your tomatoes.

There are four main categories of tomatoes:

- **CHERRY**- small and sweet with an intense flavor, great to eat raw and with salads
- **PASTE**- also known as "plum tomatoes," great for making tomato sauces, drier and meatier tomatoes
- **SLICING**- tend to have a uniformly round shape, often used on sandwiches and salads
- **BEEFSTEAK**- oblong and large tomatoes with complex flavors



GETTING STARTED

- **STARTING INDOORS:** Since tomatoes originated near the equator, they need a lot of warmth to grow. If you would like to start your tomatoes from seed, you will need to start your tomatoes indoors. Start seeding your tomatoes in March to give them the proper amount of time to grow in a warm environment.
- **EARLY CARE:** Make sure that your plants are in appropriately-sized pots. As they grow, you should move them to larger pots. In late April and early May, start to reduce the amount of water and fertilizer you are giving the plants. This will help prepare them for the outdoor environment.
- **TRANSPLANTING:** Typically, it becomes warm enough in late May and early June to move your tomato plants outdoors. If you transplant your plants too early in the season, the cold may shock your plants and stunt their growth.

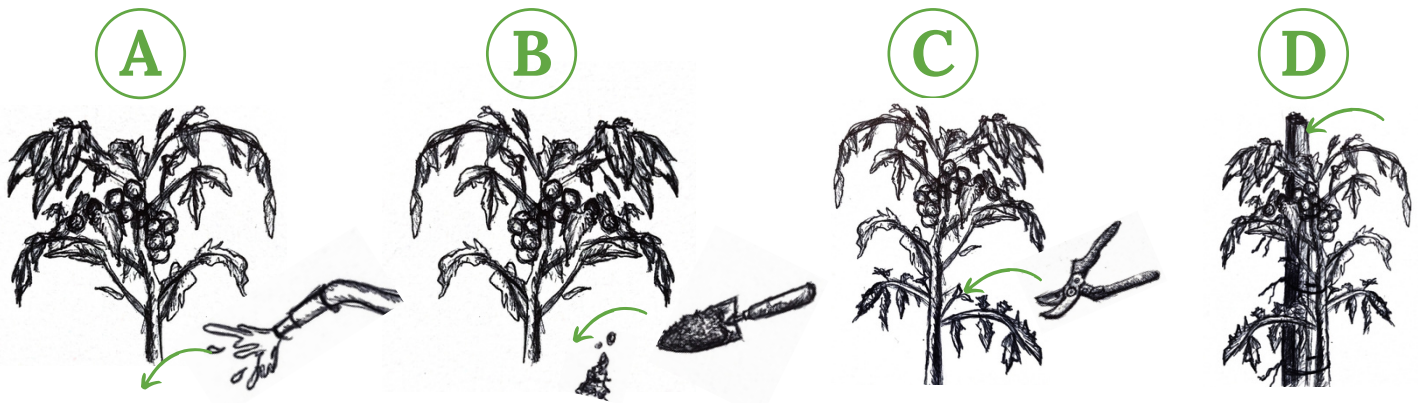


GROWING CHARACTERISTICS

Tomatoes have two different types of growth patterns:

- **DETERMINATE** tomato plants have a bush-like growth pattern that tapers off at a height of 4-5 ft. Tomatoes on determinate plants all ripen around the same time.
- **INDETERMINATE** tomato plants keep growing and producing fruit until they are controlled by a gardener or the weather. They grow very tall and do not have a set height.

GROWING PRACTICES



A. WATERING: Tomatoes need roughly one inch of water per week. Too much water can cause the plants to crack. Also, try to avoid watering leaves or splashing soil to reduce chances of disease.

B. FERTILIZING: Apply a fertilizer, compost, or fish emulsion, several times throughout the growing season. For tomatoes, it is beneficial to use a fertilizer with 5 parts nitrogen, 10 parts phosphorous, 5 parts potassium (5-10-5) if possible.

C. PRUNING: Either remove side shoots growing between the main stem and leaf branches or remove all side shoots below the first flowers. While pruning may reduce the amount of fruit produced, it can strengthen the structure of your plant, increase the size of the plant's fruit, mitigate disease, and increase airflow to your plant.

D. STAKING: In order to prop up your plants and keep your tomato leaves off of the ground, use a cage or stake to prop up your plants.

Sources: NYC Parks GreenThumb, Cornell Cooperative Extension.

Illustrations by Olivia Golden.