

Tomatoes



These notes have been written assuming that you are very new to this and you have purchased some young plants to start.

There are many different types of Tomatoes that you can grow at home, we recommend the following for growing in the Enfield area:



Alicante



Beefsteak



Black Opal



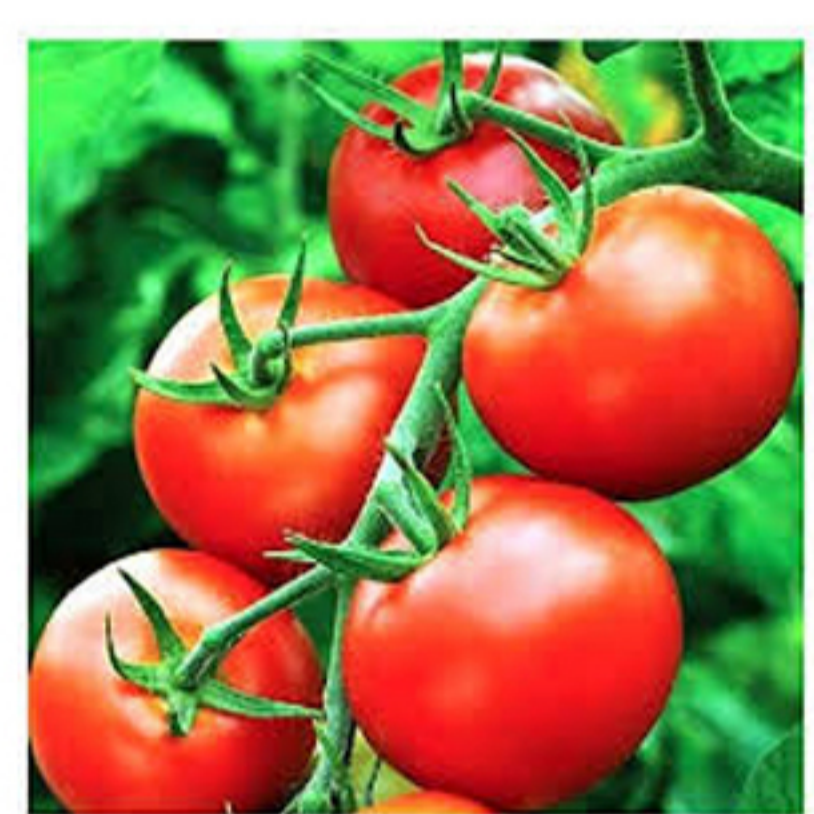
Black Russian



Gardeners Delight



Micro Tom



Moneymaker



Red Alert



Shirley



Tumbling Tom

Preparation

You can plant your tomato plants in either a grow bag, a container with compost, a hanging basket or in the ground. They work almost everywhere from a simple window box to a full growing plot, so there should be no excuse not to find an area at home to have a go!

Organise and prepare the space in your garden – its best to try to find a place that is out of the way and in as much sunshine as possible.

Don't take the plants outside until very late April or early May as it may be too cold at night. It is best to keep them on the kitchen window sill or anywhere inside that can still get some sunshine.

You can simply keep the plant in its pot and put it on an old saucer or plate if you want to protect your kitchen surfaces – don't forget to water every day – especially if you've still got your heating on!

Planting

Wait until the risk of frost has passed – hopefully late April / early May before planting out.

The roots of the tomatoes will have filled the pots, and the first flowers should have formed.

Vine or cordon tomatoes will need to be supported by being tied to stakes or canes pushed firmly into the ground or tied to a self-supporting structure.

Make sure you put toppers on canes to protect from eye injuries – you can have fun making these out of anything, a simple way is to use empty upturned yoghurt pots.

For the heavier tomato varieties, you may need to be creative and use more than 1 cane per plant – if you are careful, extra canes can be added during the growing process as you need them.

Growing

Your tomato plant will grow side shoots - When they are about 2.5cm long, remove the side shoots regularly, this is called 'pinching out' - leave approx 6 of the strongest ones.

Side shoots grow where the base of the leaf joins the main stem . Those growing in hanging baskets do not need to have side shoots removed.

Tomatoes need watering on a regular basis to keep the soil or compost moist. Water the base of the plant not the leaves, in the early morning or late afternoon. You should try to add feed every 10-14 days.

Talk to your plants and get your kids to sing to them – it really does help – they are great listeners!

Keep watering regularly - each day when really hot and feed them every 10-14 days.



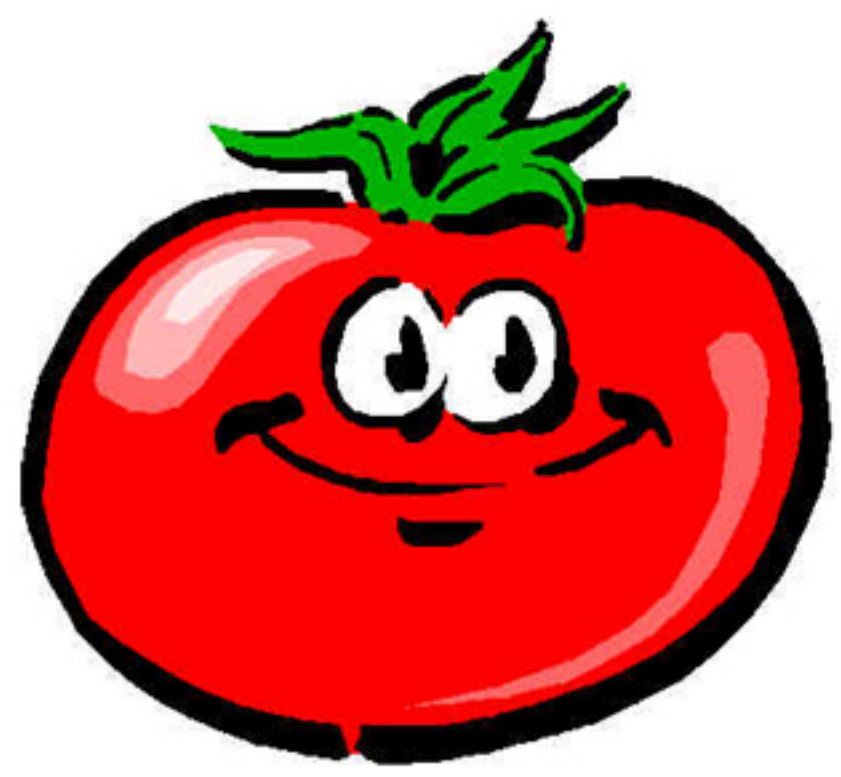
GP Garden Services

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Harvesting

Watch out for them starting to ripen and be as patient as you can before starting to harvest. Harvest is best when they are the right colour for you. Gently hold the fruit, twist off and enjoy.

Tips & Tricks

- Once you have 'pinched out' try to plant the pinched shoots into damp compost and keep warm and wet. If you are lucky you may just get yourself a few additional plants for free!
- If you harvest them in the evening and eat them straight away, they will have a slightly sweeter taste as that day's sunshine will be 'locked in'.
The sunshine raises the sugar content of the fruit.
- If you run out of bamboo canes, before buying any more try to find some similar 'green' sticks from areas such as Hilly fields / Forty Hall. *Please do NOT cut them from the trees but do look under and around for any recently fallen ones.*

Other Thoughts & Activities

- You could write a tomato growing song and sing it to your plants regularly.
- If you have a few different tomato plants you could divide them up between your family and have a competition – either the greatest number of tomatoes or greatest total weight of tomatoes.
 - Keep an eye open to late night sabotage by your opponents.
- Tomato plants also make great still life models for art classes, as they change colour the drawings could make a great comparison game.
 - Play a game trying to think of as many uses for tomatoes as possible; Ideas can include a sandwich, as a sauce which can accompany pasta or meat, just plain old tomatoes, tomato sauce, tomato soup or ammunition against dad's singing!

