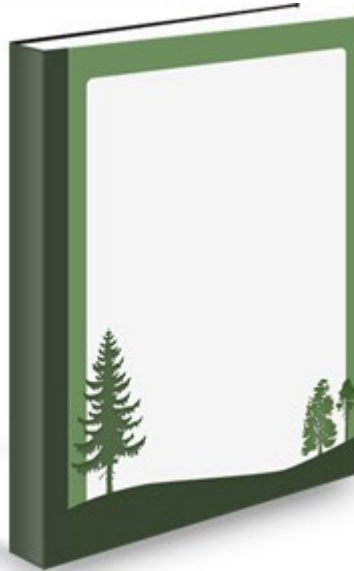


## The Basics of Tomato Growing

# A Rough Guide to Tomato Growing

Producing Your Own Home Grown Tomatoes



*This Product Brought To You By:*

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<http://growatomato.com/>

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# The Basics of Tomato Growing

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# The Basics of Tomato Growing

## Seed and Plant Selection

### **Tomato Types**

There are 2 general types of tomato:

- determinate or bush tomatoes
- indeterminate or vine tomatoes (also known as cordon tomatoes)

Bush tomatoes grow to determinate size and tend to produce all their fruit over a relatively short time period.

Vine tomatoes grow to an indeterminate size, controlled by pruning, and develop trusses as they grow from the bottom to the top of the plant. The lower trusses produce their fruit first. Consequently vine tomatoes produce fruit over a longer extended period of time. Select between bush or vine dependent on your requirements and the space you have available for your tomato plants.

### **Tomato Size**

Tomatoes grow in different sizes, typically you can select from Cherry, Standard, Plum or beefsteak tomatoes. Cherry being the smallest fruit, that come in bite sized tomatoes, to beefsteak which are large and can be sliced for a salad.

### **Tomato Uses**

Consider how you want to use your tomatoes before selecting your seeds or plants. Generally the cherry tomatoes are great for salads and eating straight from the plant, standard tomatoes are general purpose and can be used both for salads and cooking, plum tomatoes are a good cooking choice and beefsteak are great for slicing into a burger or for a salad but can also be used for cooking.

You can visit [Tomato Plants and Seeds](http://growatomato.com) for a selection of tomato seeds and plants that are available for online purchases from a UK source.

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## Planting Tomatoes

### **Location**

Tomatoes love plenty of sunshine, so you need to select a position where they will see a minimum of 6 hours sunshine a day. The best place will be a relatively well sheltered south facing position. In the UK it is probably best to be considering a greenhouse if that is an option.

Other factors to consider: -

- Ready supply of water
- Soil condition, well drained and loamy with a pH of between 6 – 7 ideally (but can cope with 5.5 to 9.5)
- Sheltered from high winds and extreme changes of temperature

### **Soil Preparation**

For best results tomatoes need a good supply of nitrogen, so prepare your soil by forking in a good mix of nitrogen rich compost and well rotted manure. If you want to be super efficient you can dig a trench about 18” deep and put in a layer of newspaper at the bottom as a mulch to help retain moisture. Remembering of course that you do not want a water logged condition, but you do want a consistent presence of moisture.

Mix topsoil with compost and a well rotted manure mix to fill the trench. After planting you can add a further mulch to the top of the soil, to help further with moisture retention and to keep weeds under control. Remember tomatoes like warm damp feet so don't be too quick with the mulch as this will tend to prevent the soil warming.

### **Acclimatise the Tomato Plants**

Try not to shock your plants by planting them straight from the greenhouse or indoors overnight. Introduce them to the great outdoors a little bit at a time.

Put them out during the day in a shady spot and bring them back in at night for about 10 to 14 days.

This will make them more hardy and likely to survive.

As long as they are not exposed to frost as it will only take one exposure to frost to kill them.

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## **Planting Out**

When the plants have been acclimatised you can either plant them in pots, growbags or soil prepared as previously described. The plants will need to be spaced approximately 18” apart if being planted in soil and should be planted deep enough in for the soil to be up to the first leaves of the plant stem.

If planting in pots, use a pot around 12” in diameter and fill it with a good general purpose compost to about an inch from the rim. You can top it up further as the plant becomes established. For growbags, aim for 2 to 3 plants per growbag, any more and the plants will be overcrowded and struggling for nutrients.

## **Supporting Tomato Plants**

There are various ways of supporting tomato plants, you can use a simple stake pushed in next to the plant, taking care not to damage the roots. You could also use a form of tomato or plant cage or you can create a structure yourself using strong stakes and garden strings.

Use a soft garden string to tie off the plants, they damage easily so you cannot tie too tightly or use ties that will potentially cause damage e.g. garden wire.

Select a spot on the plant that will support the trusses, ideally under a leaf node. You need to do this as the weight of the fruit when it comes could easily snap an unsupported stem.

Determinate type plants may not need staking; you can keep an eye on the plants to see what they are doing. It doesn't hurt of course to support them if you think the fruit is going to hang down to the ground or you think things are a little overcrowded in terms of achieving good air circulation.

A plant cage will hold the fruit up and you can arrange the plant for better air passage. This is a bit of a judgment call really which you will need to decide on yourself.

For a selection of growing aids and planting options you can visit [Tomato Accessories](http://growatomato.com) where you will find a range of planters, pots and seed trays available.

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## Tomato Care

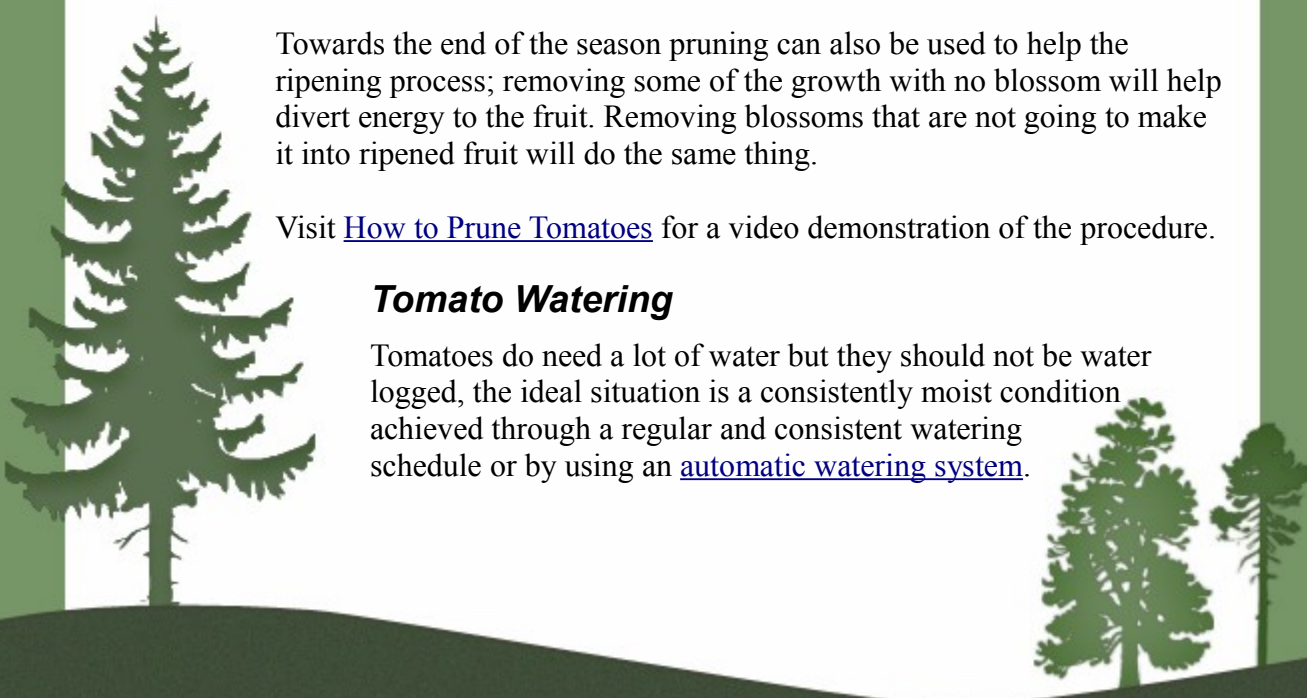
### **Tomato Pruning**

Determinate type tomato plants do not require pruning, although a little thinning out to promote the required air circulation would not do any harm.

Indeterminate tomato plants do however require pruning.

Firstly, to prevent contamination from the soil, it is a good idea to prune off all the suckers below the first truss. Then you need to decide how many vines you want to grow, normally this would be between 1 to 3, you can have a single vine by removing all suckers. Or alternatively, by allowing a stem to grow just above the first fruit truss you can get a second vine and for a 3rd stem allow the next one up from the second vine to remain and develop.

Another reason for pruning is to control the number of trusses you want. Normally you would be looking for between 4 to 6 trusses on a vine dependent on the length of your growing season. The longer the season the more trusses you can get to the ripening stage, also depends on whether you are growing in a greenhouse or outside, greenhouses again prolong your season.



Towards the end of the season pruning can also be used to help the ripening process; removing some of the growth with no blossom will help divert energy to the fruit. Removing blossoms that are not going to make it into ripened fruit will do the same thing.

Visit [How to Prune Tomatoes](#) for a video demonstration of the procedure.

### **Tomato Watering**

Tomatoes do need a lot of water but they should not be water logged, the ideal situation is a consistently moist condition achieved through a regular and consistent watering schedule or by using an [automatic watering system](#).

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As tomatoes reach the ripening stage you can actually back off on the watering a little to ensure you have a nice firm but juicy fruit. Again this is a bit of a judgment call which you may need to determine through experimentation.

The plants should not be struggling for water but what you can use as a rule of thumb is to allow the surface of the soil to dry out as long as you are sure you still have sufficient moisture below the immediate surface.

### *Top Tip*

In the interest of maintaining warm moist feet it is a good idea as part of your watering program to allow the water to warm to air temperature before applying.

This is not as difficult as it sounds, you just fill your cans with water allow them to sit overnight and then refill after watering for the next day. Prevents any shocking or cooling of the plant roots.



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## **Tomato Feeding**

If you have prepared your soil with a nitrogen rich compost and well rotted manure mix then you will be well on the way to ensuring that you plants will get all the nutrients they need.

Other ways of feeding your plants include the use of a nitrogen rich mulch or by using a feed supplement. How often you apply the supplement depends very much on the type selected. What I would suggest is that you use a formulated tomato feed and follow the instructions supplied with the product.

Plants in containers or growbags will need a regular supplement, but for plants that have been put into the ground it is less critical. Also bear in mind that you can overfeed your plants and that this is as detrimental as not providing enough feed. The obvious way around this is to stick to the instructions and not to get too feed happy.

## **Pest Control**

Check your tomato plants regularly for any signs of pest infestation, typical pest attacks can come from whitefly or aphids as the most common, but there are others. Make sure you lift the leaves to look underneath as this is where the pesky little creatures tend to hide. If you find that you have a problem then there are various ways of dealing with them, but it is important that you take immediate action as the problem will very quickly escalate.

An easy and simple treatment is to spray the plants with a soapy solution which will kill the adults, but you will need to retreat to take care of any new hatchings. For more information on pest control visit [Tomato Pest Control](#)

## **Tomato Problems**

There is a whole range of tomato problems that you could potentially encounter, but as a rule of thumb if you maintain a regular and consistent watering program, protect your plants from extremes of temperature and prevent the plant from contacting the soil through correct pruning and support, then you will almost certainly avoid most of, if not all, the causes of tomato problems.

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## Additional Resources for Tomato Growing

[Good Tomato Growing](#)

[Home Grown Tomatoes](#)

[Growing Red Tomatoes](#)

[Grow A Tomato](#)

**You can visit any or all of these site for more information on tomato growing and care and you are invited to subscribe to the RSS feed by email which you will find at the top right of the home pages.**

**Getting RSS updates by email will ensure that you receive the latest posts and tips on tomato growing covering all the subjects discussed here in greater detail.**

**For specialist advice on growing tomatoes organically you can visit:**

[Organic Tomato Magic](#)

