

Tomatoes Love Compost!

We have all heard our neighbours and relatives talk about how great their tomatoes are and how tasty their bountiful harvests always seem. But have you ever asked yourself why their tomatoes are better than yours? What is their secret?

The difference between an average tomato and a great tomato is compost. In fact, tomatoes love compost for many reasons and after reading this, you will agree that adding compost to your tomato patch will make all the difference in the world!

Using compost is a great soil amendment for many reasons:

- First tomatoes are heavy feeders of nutrients. Things like nitrogen and carbon are essential for proper plant growth. Compost contains a wide array of both macro and micro nutrients that can affect the growth and fruiting requirements of healthy tomato plants.
- Compost will add that dark rich colour to the soil which will warm up sooner in the spring and keep the soil warmer into the cooler months as it helps to attract and retain heat from the sun.
- Compost also helps correct both clay and sandy type soil problems. Compost is like a sponge in the soil; it will hold sufficient water. This means less watering from you. Also the less you water, the more concentrated the sugar will be in the fruit. Remember, tomatoes are fruits and it is the sweet taste we enjoy. Also too much water can cause the fruit to split.
- Another benefit that helps boost soil and plant health is microorganisms found in properly composted organic matter. These microorganisms are found naturally in the soil that decompose organic matter. However, commercial composting operations tend to have a much higher amount of these organisms per gram than that found in normal soil. Why is this important? 95% of soil microorganisms are beneficial to soil building and plant protection. Only 5% of microorganisms found in soil can cause plant diseases and invite other pests by weakening the plants themselves. Microorganisms are also converting food from the soil and from the plants via the root system in a symbiotic system of give and take. This conversion process helps the plant use minerals and nutrients in the soil for healthy growth and fruit production.



Tomato Facts:

- Tomatoes are actually a fruit and not a vegetable.
- The tomato is native to the highlands in Peru
- It is believed that it was cultivated in Mexico around 500 BC.
- There are over 7500 varieties of tomatoes grown world wide.

Top Tomato Producers in 2018:

1. China: 56,800,000 tonnes
2. India: 18,700,000 tonnes
3. United States: 14,500,000 tonnes
4. Turkey: 11,900,000 tonnes
5. Egypt: 8,300,000 tonnes

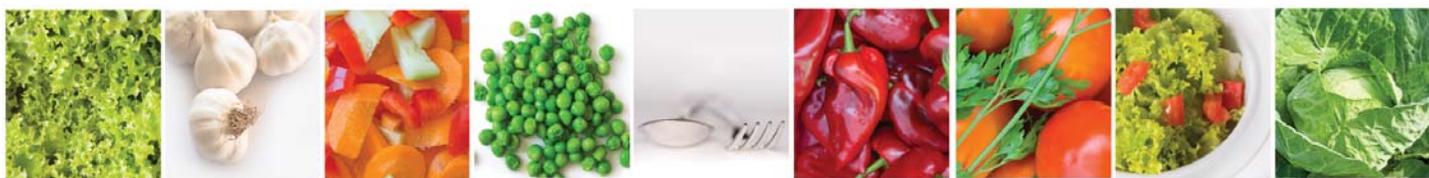
(Source: The Daily Records 2018)

The heaviest tomato ever recorded was 3.51 kg (7 lb 12 oz) cultivar "Delicious"

The largest plant every record was cultivar "Sungold" and reached 19.8 m (65 ft.) in length, grown by Nutriculture Ltd (UK) in 2000.

Tomatoes contain an antioxidant called lycopene. This chemical has been shown to have some protective properties against a variety of cancers.

Vitamins like B6, niacin, potassium, and folate found in abundance in tomatoes are potent protectors from heart disease and high blood pressure.



9 Steps To Care For Tomato Plants

The modern supermarket tomato has been bred for several traits such as pest and disease resistance, hardiness for cold, longer storage time, uniform size for mechanical harvesting, food processing, etc.

With over 7500 varieties of tomatoes, it is hard to know which one is right for you. Luckily, many producers of tomato seeds and plants write in great detail about flavours, growing conditions, days to maturity, and preferred uses like fresh eating, canning, or markets such as commercial processors.

One of the hottest food trends are heirloom tomatoes. This accounts for a large number of varieties grown. Heirloom tomatoes can date back as early as 40 years to several centuries. They are often more flavourful and unique than their modern cousins.

Tomatoes can be divided into two categories called determinate and indeterminate. Determinate types are those that grow to a certain height and the fruit will mature all at once. This type is used by farmers who want to harvest all at once, for such uses as can tomatoes. Determinate varieties are also well suited for patio planters because of their bushy growing characteristics.

The indeterminate varieties tend to climb on structures much like a vine and the fruit matures throughout the season. This type is more suited for those who want to enjoy tomatoes throughout the growing season.

Online Seed Resources For Tomatoes

Vesey's Seeds: www.veseys.com

Seeds of Diversity: www.seeds.ca

Stoke Seeds: www.stokeseeds.com

Upper Canada Seeds: www.uppercanadaseeds.ca

Ontario Seed Company (OSC): www.oscseeds.com

Territorial Seed Company: www.territorialseed.com

Urban Harvest Gardens Alternatives: www.uharvest.ca

Dominion Seed House: www.dominion-seed-house.com

1. **Don't Crowd Seedlings:** If you are starting tomatoes from seed, be sure to give the seedlings room to branch out. Transplant them as soon as they get their first true leaves and move them into at least a 4" pot in about 2 weeks.
2. **Preheat the garden soil:** Tomatoes love heat. Cover the planting area with black plastic a couple of weeks before you plant. Those extra degrees of warmth will translate into earlier tomatoes.
5. **Bury Them:** Bury tomato plants deeper than they come in the pot, all the way up to a few top leaves. Tomatoes are able to develop roots all along their stems. You can either dig a deeper hole or simply dig a shallow tunnel and lay the plant sideways. It will straighten up and grow toward the sun. Be careful not to drive your pole or cage into the stem when staking.
6. **Mulch Later:** Mulch after the ground has had a chance to warm up. Mulching helps conserve water and prevents the soil and soil born diseases from splashing up on the plants.
7. **Remove Bottom Leaves:** When plants are about 3' tall, remove the leaves from the bottom 1' of stem. These are usually the first leaves to develop fungus problems. They get the least amount of sun and soil born pathogens can be unintentionally splashed up onto them.
8. **Pinch and Prune:** Pinch and remove suckers that develop in the crotch joint of two branches. They won't bear fruit and will take energy away from the rest of the plant. But go easy on pruning the rest of the plant.
9. **Water Regularly:** Water deeply and regularly while the plants are developing. Irregular watering, (missing a week and trying to make up for it), leads to blossom end rot and cracking.

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