

Hello gardeners! It won't be long before the heirloom tomatoes and other vegetable, herb and flower seedlings arrive at the Co-op. As tomatoes are everyone's favorite garden vegetable... here's a few tips that'll help you have a great tomato harvest this season.

- Dig your tomato bed deep for good root development and drainage. Add lots of organic matter (compost).
- Plant them in the sunniest spot available.
- Plant after danger of last frost (generally May 15<sup>th</sup>).
- Remove small flowers and fruit on the plant to promote plant development as opposed to fruit development at this early stage.
- Stack your plants with large sturdy cages.
- Don't over fertilize, especially with too much nitrogen.
- Plant your tomatoes "up to their necks", leaving just a few inches sticking out of the ground.
- Add a piece of banana peel (potassium), a tbsp of Epsom salts (magnesium) and a tsp of crushed eggshells (calcium to prevent blossom end rot) to the planting hole.
- Space your tomatoes 18 – 36 inches apart.
- Mulch thoroughly around plants to conserve moisture, minimize weeds and minimize blight development.
- Protect your plants with newspaper "cone tents" if cold weather is eminent.
- Help your plants set fruit by lightly shaking or tapping their cages on warm, still, dry days.
- Avoid handling plants when wet.
- Don't smoke around plants or handle after smoking to prevent tobacco mosaic virus.
- Use seaweed based foliar sprays to aid in plant health.
- Water regularly avoiding overhead watering that causes dirt to splash up on underside of leaves.
- Harvest regularly and keep tomatoes at room temperature with shoulders down.

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