

Tomato time: Terms and tips for growing your own

TERMS

Tomato plants are classified as either indeterminate or determinate.

Indeterminate plants: grow all season, continuing to bloom and produce fruit as long as weather conditions are favorable.

Determinate plants are the compact bush type, like Better Bush, they grow to a certain size, set fruit, and stop growing, bearing fruit all at once. This type of tomato is popular with gardeners who like to can and make sauce.

Tomatoes need the right combination of good soil, water and heat. Use transplants, like **Bonnie Plants**, they're faster than starting from seed and easier to grow. Transplants offered in biodegradable pots are planted directly in-ground, preventing transplant shock and saving millions of pounds of plastic from landfills. Find a sunny location (at least 6 hours of sun) with good drainage, and if you plant tomatoes each season, it's a good idea to rotate



the spot in the garden where you plant them.

1. Prepare your plot: Loosen the ground to create a welcoming bed for roots to grow. You can add 3 or 4 inches of compost or other organic matter, especially in clay or sandy soils. Then dig a hole that is as deep as the plant is tall because you are going to bury two-thirds of the plant.

2. Slip Plant from pot if in plastic: Gently remove the plant by slipping the plastic container from the root-ball. Don't tug on the plant stem; this can sever

it from the roots. If the roots are growing out of holes in the bottom of the pot, tear or cut them away and squeeze and twist the pot as necessary to work it from the roots. If your plant is in a biodegradable pot, just tear off the bottom of the pot to make sure that roots are in instant contact with the soil.

3. Bury Two-thirds of the plant: Set the plant in the hole deeply enough so that two-thirds of it is buried. Roots will sprout all along

the buried stem to make a stronger plant. You can pinch off the lower leaves if you prefer, but it is not necessary.

4. Don't forget to fertilize: Mix fertilizer into the soil that you will put back into the hole. It is best to fertilize according to recommendations from a soil test, but if you don't have that, use a timed-release fertilizer, which doesn't leach...or use an organic fertilizer at the rate recommended on the label. **Bonnie's Vegetable and Herb Plant Food** is a natural fertilizer and the same liquid food that Bonnie uses to grow plants in greenhouses across the country. Tomatoes love it.

Your tomato plant is almost ready to grow--When you're done, two-thirds of the entire plant will be buried; only the top of the tomato plant remains above ground.

5. Water Well: Water thoroughly. This is very important to help settle the soil and start the plant.

6. Maintain your mulch: Mulch with pine needles, straw, or compost to help keep moisture in the soil and prevent weeds. Mulch should be 2 to 3 inches deep for effective weed control.

