



GROWING TOMATOES IN LOS ANGELES COUNTY

Seasonal planting can vary depending on microclimates and sun/shade conditions of a particular space. Observe your garden and consult with your local nursery when planning your garden. The warm season typically extends from late spring to early fall. Other warm season plants include tomatoes, peppers, melons, squash, beans, corn, and cucumbers.

SELECTING A TOMATO PLANT VARIETY

You can bring this worksheet to your local nursery to get recommendations for a tomato variety that fits your needs and has been cultivated to address common issues in your zone.



My zone is: ☐ 7a ☐ 7b ☐ 8a ☐ 8b ☐ 9a ☐ 9b ☐ 10a ☐ 10b ☐ 11a

I want to grow this type of tomato: ☐ Beefsteak (Sandwiches, Burgers) ☐ Cherry (Snack, Salads) ☐ Roma (Salads, Sauces)

I'd like my tomatoes to: ☐ Ripen in batch (determinate) ☐ Produce fruit ongoing throughout the season (indeterminate)

My growing space is: ☐ Inground ☐ Limited space (determinate) ☐ Lots of space (indeterminate)
☐ Raised beds ☐ Container(s)

The best type of tomato for me will be: _____

I will plant: ☐ Seeds ☐ Seedlings/Plants

Time to plant based on my zone: _____



INDETERMINATE

- Grow like a vine
- Can get to be over 20 feet tall
- Produce fruit throughout the season
- Most heirlooms, cherry types, dwarf, Beefsteak, Big Boy Brandywine, Sungold and Sweet Million

VS



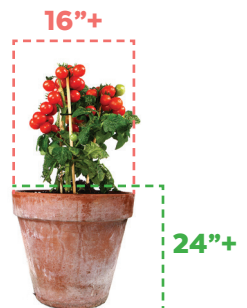
DETERMINATE

- Grow like a bush
- Generally stay about 3 feet tall
- Produce fruit in single batch
- Many Romas, San Marzano, Amish Paste, Celebrity, Marglobe, Rutgers

GROWING TOMATOES IN A POT

15 gallon minimum.

Good drainage and high quality potting soil. Look for Patio or Bush variety. Water regularly to moist, not soggy. Fertilize every 2-4 weeks to increase yield.



WHEN TO PLANT

Start seeds indoors, late winter through early spring

FEBRUARY

Plant seedlings outdoors, early spring through summer

MARCH

APRIL

MAY

JUNE

JULY



WHEN TOMATOES WILL FRUIT:

- Nighttime temperature above 55°
- Daytime temperature doesn't exceed 90°-100°
- Minimum 6 hours of sunlight each day



GROWING TOMATOES FROM SEED

Tomato seeds can be sown directly outside after all danger of frost has passed, or started indoors and transplanted in the garden after they've developed into sturdy plants.

- ☐ **Moisten soil or seed starting mix.** Place two or three seeds for each plant you'd like to end up with, as not all seeds germinate. (You will thin to the sturdiest looking seedlings later.)
- ☐ **Cover seeds lightly with about 1/4" soil.** Water seeds lightly so as not to displace them. Keep soil evenly moist until sprouts emerge (1 to 2 weeks).
- ☐ **Continue to water regularly as sprouts grow sturdier.** If transplanting, it may be six weeks or more before they're ready to be moved out to the garden. Once plants are established in the garden, you can water less frequently, but make sure to water deeply to reach the roots.



TIPS WHEN SELECTING SEEDLINGS AT A NURSERY

- **Height:** Select a plant 4 – 8" tall
- **Leaves:** Intact, evenly colored, and deep green
- **Stem:** Strong, free of cracks or disease
- **Roots:** Do not extend outside the bottom of the container
- **Soil:** Moist

Other items to pickup:

- ☐ Organic fertilizer
- ☐ Stakes
- ☐ Mulch



Dig deep. Space 1 ½ -3 feet between plants.

PLANTING YOUR TOMATO SEEDLINGS

- ☐ **PREPARE SOIL** – Make sure it has good drainage. Amend with organic material before planting.
- ☐ **DIG HOLES** – Dig deep. Space 1 ½ -3 feet between plants.
- ☐ **ADD ORGANIC FERTILIZER AND/OR COMPOST** – Mix into hole before planting. Can fertilize again when blossoms appear and every 2-4 weeks to improve yield.
- ☐ **PLANT SEEDLING** – Gently loosen root ball. Bury up to the second-from-top set of leaves. Snap off lower leaves at the stem – these nodes will produce roots, resulting in sturdier plants.
- ☐ **SUPPORT** – Indeterminate varieties should have at least a 6 foot stake or cage. Plants can be secured to stakes with green tape or string.
- ☐ **MULCH** – Surround plants with organic mulch to maintain moisture.
- ☐ **WATER** – Tomatoes prefer deep, infrequent watering — once or twice a week, more often in high temperatures or containers. Water the soil, not the plant to cut down on disease.
- ☐ **FERTILIZE** when blossoms appear and every 2-4 weeks through harvest to increase yield.

WHEN TO HARVEST

- Achieved uniform ripened color (red, pink, yellow, blended depending on variety)
- Slightly soft but not squishy
- When temperatures exceed 90 degrees (may need to harvest early and ripen off vine)



TOMATO PLANT GROWTH



RESOURCES

PLANTING ZONES & PLANT SELECTION

<https://garden.org/apps/calendar/?q=92672>

PLANTING ZONES & SCHEDULE

<http://bit.ly/SMCPlantSchedule>

GROWING TOMATOES IN LOS ANGELES

https://www.gardenguides.com/how_7315829_grow-tomatoes-southern-california.html

FROST DATES

<https://www.plantmaps.com/interactive-california-last-frost-date-map.php>