



The Great Tomato Race is On! - Don Kinzler

Home gardeners who love tomatoes usually want two things: a main season crop for fresh eating, canning and processing, plus a few very early tomatoes to get our first taste following a long winter.

Here are ways to speed and increase tomato production:

1. Choose a suitable variety.

Tomato varieties are divided into 2 main classes

Determinate varieties grow to a certain plant size, then ripen fruit in concentrated time

Indeterminate varieties produce vines all season, harvest is less consolidated.

The number of days from transplant to fruiting

Early varieties are 58 to 65 days

Mid-season, main crop varieties are 66 to 75 days

Late varieties are 80 to 110 days.

Some favorites: Early Girl (58), Lark (60), Whopper (65), Better Bush (68), Beefy Boy (70), Dakota Gold (70), Mountain Spring (70), Sheyenne (70), Super Fantastic (70), Celebrity (72) Cannonball (75), Big Beef (73), Beefsteak and many heirlooms (80 - 100) days.

2. Normal "safe" date for transplanting outdoors is May 15 to 25.

For risk-takers, to get early tomatoes, plant in late April and protect with plastic jugs, etc.

3. Tomatoes are a warm-season crop. Hasten growth by encouraging soil and air to warm up quicker.

A. Locate a plant or two in the warm microclimate of your home's sunny south side.

B. Use clear plastic "mulch" to heat the soil. Can be done several weeks before planting.

4. When buying tomato plants, choose vigorous plants with fresh green color. Yellowed leaves

Indicate the plant is nutrition-starved and will take longer to establish and grow.

5. "Harden Off" plants by placing them outdoors 5 to 10 days before planting.

6. Plant deeply, by burying plants right up to their "ears". Roots form along buried stem.

7. Protect from cutworms with a loose collar of plastic or metal two inches above and below soil.

8. Apply a water soluble fertilizer solution after planting.

Fertilize throughout the season with moderation. Fruit and plant size will increase, but fruiting may be delayed. Never use high-nitrogen lawn fertilizer on tomatoes.

9. Early blossoms often drop without setting fruit, when night temps drop below 50-55 degrees.

A naturally occurring plant hormone is sold called "Blossom Set" which aids early fruit set.

10. Pruning of tomatoes. Indeterminate types should have terminal growth pinched at least by early

August to prevent excess plant growth at the expense of fruiting.

11. What's an heirloom variety? Types developed before hybrids, older than about 1960

12. Grafted Tomatoes

Relatively new to the United States

Special vigorous rootstock varieties are used to transmit vigor and disease resistance to varieties lacking these qualities, such as some heirloom types.

The graft must be kept above soil level to prevent top variety from rooting in.

Must be staked or caged, so no branches touch ground.

13. The race is on!

Thank you for attending! For more information, subscribe to my free gardening blog found at <http://growingtogether.areavoices.com/> Twice a week I post timely gardening information tailored to our growing region.



Shade Gardening With Greater Success - Don Kinzler

Shade in the home landscape can be a pleasant opportunity, rather than an obstacle. Shade gardening can be embraced, leading to beauty that will easily rival full-sun locations.

Key Points for Improved Success with Shade Gardening:

1. Analyze the depth of shade - shade varies greatly in available light level. Many plants for shade are described as preferring light, moderate, or heavy shade.
 - A. North side of buildings - moderate shade, may receive morning or late afternoon sun
 - B. Shade from Trees - may be dense, heavy shade of multiple large shade trees
Or light, filtered sun/shade from a smaller tree, or single large tree
 - C. Combined shade from both buildings and large trees - creates a very heavy, dense shade.
2. Observe the area morning, noon, evening to see if area gets some sun, and for how many hours.
3. Understand that low light is not the only challenging factor in shade gardening.
 - A. Areas may be very dry, with moisture being sapped by large trees or shrubs.
 - B. Areas may be overly moist if air circulation and drainage aren't adequate.
 - C. Soil may be either hard-packed or powder dry.
 - D. Areas might be low in fertility as tree or shrub roots rob nutrition from the soil
4. Most shade-loving plants also love soil rich in organics. Soil that is either clay or sand will benefit from additions of compost and peat moss.
5. Annuals and perennials grown in shade should be fertilized every spring, and at least monthly until July 4 to compensate for low fertility that is common.
6. Moisture must be carefully monitored to be sure plants aren't staying too wet, or too dry.
7. Shaded areas under large trees are a challenge. Soil is often very dry, and underlain with roots.
Containers can be utilized beautifully under trees, with pots filled with colorful annuals.
8. Shaded perennial gardens become even more colorful with splashes of annuals here and there.
9. Containers of annuals are highly successful in shade because they're easier to keep watered.
10. The all-important factor: Choose plants that thrive in shade.
 - A. Annual flowers give important season-long color - Experiment to see which works best.
Coleus, begonias, impatiens, browalia, lobelia, pansies, alyssum, torenia, fuchsia, Heliotrope, balsam, cleome, caladium
 - B. Bulbs. - Tulips, daffodils and crocus can be planted in shade if you treat them as annuals
The bulbs you buy already have a flower inside. Following the cold winter, they will bloom in spring, but to repeat leaves must have full sun most of the day.
 - C. Herbs and vegetables. Most herbs will do fairly well. Vegetables grown for leaves only do better in shade than vegetables that produce fruits or root crops.
 - D. Houseplants - Most houseplants love a summer vacation outdoors, and shade or part shade are the ideal locations. Good way to decorate areas under trees
 - E. Shrubs. - Grow well in the shade of trees or on the north side of buildings
include dogwoods, viburnum, alpine currant, yew, arborvitae, aronia, hydrangea, diervilla
 - F. Groundcovers - ajuga, lamium, vinca, bishop's weed, lily of the valley, wild ginger
 - G. Perennials - (on additional handout)

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Perennials for Shade

Light Shade

Astilbe
Balloon Flower (Platycodon)
Baptisia
Bee Balm (Monarda)
Bellflower (Campanula)
Coral Bells (Heuchera)
Daylily (Hemerocallis)
Epimedium
Perennial Geranium
Heliborus

Iris
Jacobs Ladder (Polemonium)
Lady's Mantle (Alchemilla)
Lobelia
Monkshood (Aconitum)
Obedient Plant (Physostegia)
Tiarella
Viola
Thalictrum

Light to Medium Shade

Bergenia
Bleeding Heart (Dicentra)
Bugbane (Actaea)
Columbine (Aquilegia)
Foxglove (Digitalis)
Goat's Beard (Arunculus)

Turtlehead (Chelone)
Sedge (Carex)
Hakone Grass (Hakonechloa)
Prairie Dropseed grass (Sporobolis)
Lady Fern (Athyrium)
Ostrich Fern (Matteucia)

Medium to Heavy Shade

Epimedium
Autumn Brilliance Fern
Ligularia

Tradescantia
Athyrium
Pulmonaria

Heavy Shade

Hosta

Solomon's Seal (Polygonatum)

Ground Covers

Ajuga
Lamium (Lamiastrum)

Lily-of-the-Valley (Convallaria)
Periwinkle (Vinca minor) with protection