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YARD 'N' GARDEN ³



EXTENSION
HORTICULTURISTS

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GROW BETTER TOMATOES IN THE GARDEN



One of the most popular garden vegetables is the tomato. Even a few plants in the flower border or a window box will provide a supply of fresh tomatoes for the table. Although most gardeners set out transplants, some prefer to seed tomatoes directly in the garden in early May. Select early varieties for direct seeding.

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There are many varieties and hybrids to choose from but not all are as dependable as others. For earliness try the Fireball, New Yorker, or Sheyenne. These produce heavy clusters of medium-size fruit on dwarf compact plants. Hybrid EE is one of the earliest hybrids. Moreton, Fantastic and Big Boy are excellent later hybrids for pruning and staking.

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If space is limited, set the plants 18-24 inches apart and prune and stake them. As plants begin to branch, remove the small shoots that develop between the leaf and main stem. Leave only one, two, or three stems per plant and tie them to a strong stake 4-5 feet high. If you have plenty of room, space the plants 3-4 feet apart and don't prune.

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When setting the plants in the garden, apply a fertilizer solution to the soil around the plants. Dissolve one-half cup of a complete fertilizer like 10-10-10 in a gallon of luke warm water and apply one-half cup of this solution per plant when transplanting.

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Experience demonstrates that it's desirable to delay tomato transplanting until after Memorial Day. Before that time you run the risk of a late spring frost damaging the plants.

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Avoid cultivating the soil after tomato plants are established. Use a mulch to smother weeds and eliminate the chance of root pruning that usually causes blossom-end-rot of the fruit.

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