



Tips for Potting Tomatoes:



Listen to us, we will help!

- **Give them room.** Most slicing tomatoes need a 5-gallon pot, though you can find cherry tomato plants that will do well in hanging baskets. Some varieties are specially bred to stay small enough for a tight container. Make sure the container has drainage holes.
- **Use good soil.** In pots as in the ground, tomatoes need well-drained soil with lots of organic matter. We

like to add a little bit of lime to provide extra calcium (which helps prevent blossom end rot). Put a couple inches of gravel in the bottom to stabilize the pot, because when the fruit sets the plant will be top-heavy. And add stakes or a tomato cage for support when you plant.

- **Plant deep.** Leave only the top two or three sets of leaves above the soil line. The part of the stem that is buried will sprout roots that help support and strengthen the plant.
- **Fertilize properly.** Choose a fertilizer that is not heavy on nitrogen (which fosters leaves at the expense of flowers and fruit). Phosphorus (for roots) and potassium (for blooms) are more important. Whether the fertilizer is organic or not, the guaranteed analysis of major elements on the label should be even, such as 3-3-3, or higher on the last two numbers, such as 4-6-5.
- **Water regularly.** Tomatoes need consistent moisture; swinging between extremes of wet and dry can do them in. Be prepared to water daily. Grandpa says water-holding gels (sold in crystal form and mixed in the soil) are especially good for rooftop tomatoes. A lot of people don't realize how hot it gets up there.

Tomato Transplant

When your seeds have sprouted and are about the size of the plants below, its time to start Transplanting them into larger containers. The following should give you some ideas on how to transplant small seedlings.



The peppers in front are not quite ready, but the tomatoes in the back have started to form their first set of true leaves and so are ready for transplant.

Next to the tray is one of my standard transplanting containers full of ordinary potting soil.

After gently prying out what I think is one of the best tomato seedlings from the tray with an ordinary table knife, this is what it looks like next to the pot.



Notice the roots are very small and underdeveloped. The seedling itself is also nearly the same height as the container.

This container is about the right size to make a hole all the way down to the bottom with something like a

pencil or chopstick, then insert the seedling into the hole gently with your finger. In this case, planting to the depth of the cotyledons is good. Then it looks like this:



Tomatoes have the ability to grow roots from any part of the plant that is buried. By transplanting it unusually deep like this, it helps the plant which would otherwise have a very weak root system develop a much stronger one. Tomatoes will actually benefit from having this done a number of times, but twice is a reasonable

number. I'll do it a second time when I transplant it out a final time into the garden.

If you have a problem with the seedling being spindly and fragile when doing this, it probably hasn't been getting enough light. With a healthy seedling this is very easy to do.

The next transplant can be a fairly large container in which it will stay in for the summer. REMEMBER tomatoes love room and benefit from a larger container. Follow the steps above to help guide you. The following is an example of the next size containers. Tomatoes love water so usually it is hard on the tomato to be in a hanging basket.



Tomato seedlings look like this above. They're ready to be transplanted into the next container.



Don't be afraid to plant the tomato deep into the transplant pot above. This helps the root system become stronger.



This is about the size of plant to do the final transplant. This should be the pot or spot it will remain the rest of the season. Tomatoes love room and water!



Whether you plant directly in the garden or in a pot, make sure you have some type of support for your tomato plants. The tomato plant will become very heavy as the plants fruit matures.



With the proper plant support, fertilizer and water, you will enjoy delicious tomatoes all summer long.



You really don't need much space in a small yard to help grow beautiful tomatoes and other vegetables.