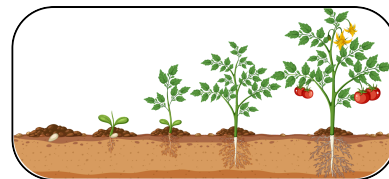


# How do I plant & care for my tomato plants?



Tomatoes are popular and rewarding vegetables to grow in a vegetable garden. Following are a few points to consider to ensure a bountiful harvest.

## 1 When can I plant my transplants?

Tomatoes can be planted out once the nighttime temperatures are consistently over 10 °C.

## 2 Is there a specific way to plant my tomato starts into the garden?

Before planting, ensure the soil is loose, well-drained, and free from weeds. Consider incorporating well rotted compost to the rooting zone a week before planting.

**There are two common ways to plant tomatoes into the ground.**

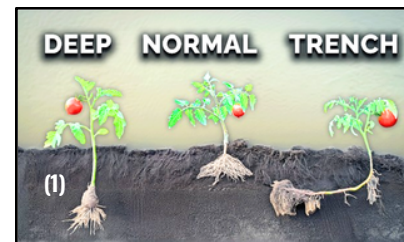
### Method #1: Vertical Planting

- Place the root ball into the planting hole until the lower leaves are touching the soil. Roots will grow along the stem ensuring a strong root system.
- Water well to a depth of 12-18 inches (30-45 cm).
- Place seedlings 2 to 3 feet apart (0.9-1.2 m) to allow sufficient sun and avoid overcrowding.
- Place tomato cages or stakes into the ground at the time of planting.

### Method #2: Trench Planting

- Pinch off any yellow or dying leaves.
- Lay long leggy transplants in a trench 3 - 4 inches deep (8-10 cm).
- Bury the stems up to the first set of true leaves
- Water well to reduce the shock of transplantation.
- Place tomato cages or stakes into the ground at the time of planting.

**Note:** View excellent video on trench planting at [Manitoba Master Gardener Association](#).



**NOTE:** Determinate tomatoes need staking while indeterminate tomatoes can be supported with tomato cages.

## 3 Should I do anything with the soil?

- Add 2-3 inches of well rotted compost to the soil and mix in lightly. This will improve the soil structure, drainage, and moisture retention. Mulch with leaves or grass clippings to minimize weeds and improve soil moisture retention.
- Tomatoes are heavy feeders. A balanced organic fertilizer such as 4-4-4 or a tomato specific blend can be worked into the planting area to provide N-P-K and micronutrients. Do not add fresh manure or high N fertilizer.
- Water deeply and consistently to prevent blossom end rot. Amend with calcium if blossom end rot develops despite consistent watering.

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# How do I care for my tomato plants cont.

## 4 Do I need to prune?

- Improve air circulation by pruning lightly and by removing any lower leaves or branches that are 8-10 inches (20-25 cm) from the ground.
- For indeterminate tomatoes, pinch out suckers to control size and direct energy to making fruit. Prune off new shoots and flowers in late summer to help ripen existing fruit.

**Tip.** Tomato flowers are self pollinating, assisted by wind. If the tomatoes are grown in a greenhouse, give the flowers a gentle shake in the middle of the day to help with pollination.

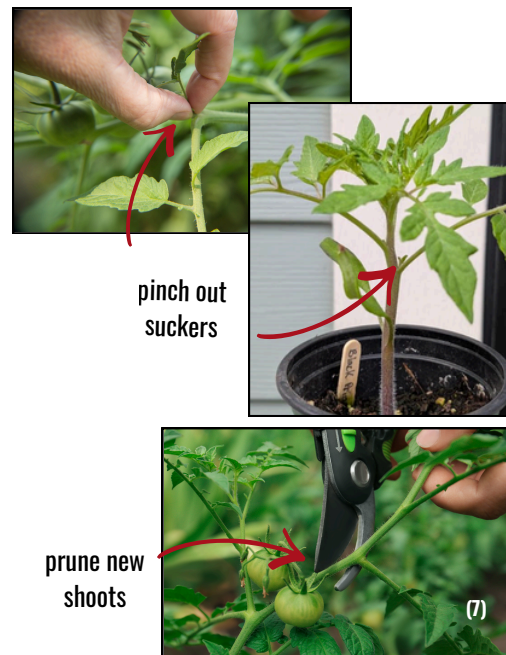


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## RESOURCES

1. Epic Gardening. 2025. What happens when you transplant tomatoes three different ways. <https://www.youtube.com/@epicgardening>.
2. Epic Gardening. 2025. How to prune tomatoes for maximum yield and health. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=q4IUhZMA900>
3. Hillock. D & E. Rebeck. 2017. *Growing Tomatoes in the Home Garden*. Oregon State University Extension. <https://extension.okstate.edu/fact-sheets/growing-tomatoes-in-the-home-garden-2.html>
4. Manitoba Master Gardener Association. 2025. *How to prune tomatoes*. <https://www.mgmanitoba.com/ask-an-mg/vegetables-and-fruits/#prune-tomatoes-video>
5. Manitoba Master Gardener Association. 2025. *How to plant tomatoes - trench method*. <https://www.mgmanitoba.com/ask-an-mg/vegetables-and-fruits/#planting-tomatoes-video>
6. National Gardening Association Editors. 2025. *Trench & Vertical Tomato Planting Techniques*. The National Gardening Association Learning Library. <https://garden.org/learn/articles/view/360/Trench-Vertical-Tomato-Planting-Techniques>
7. The Creative Vegetable Gardener. 2015. *Here's a quick way to prune intermediate tomatoes*. <https://www.creativevegetablegardener.com/pruning-indeterminate-tomatoes/>



Tomatoes are perennials and if grown in a small pot, plants can be brought inside to overwinter.