

## **Frequently Asked Questions about Tomatoes**

### **Q: What's the difference between determinate and indeterminate?**

A: Determinates are varieties that stop growing and produce the main crop all at one time. Indeterminates are varieties that continue to grow and spread the harvest out over the entire growing season.

### **Q: What are hybrid, open pollinated and heirloom?**

A: A hybrid is a commercial variety that won't come true from seed. It's an "arranged marriage" between two different varieties. It is NOT the same as genetically modified.

According to the Seed Savers Exchange (THE heirloom people): "An open-pollinated (OP) variety is one that breeds true from seed, meaning the seed saved from the parent plant will grow offspring with the same characteristics. OP seed is produced by allowing a natural flow of pollen between different plants of the same variety. Heirloom varieties are OP varieties with a long history of being cultivated and saved within a family or group. They have evolved by natural or human selection over time."

### **Q: What tomatoes are good for growing in containers?**

A: The bush varieties, and most especially the variety 'Patio' which was bred specifically for pot growing.

### **Q: What is the most heat tolerant type?**

A: Cherries. Big slicers can't set fruit if temps are too hot (consistently above 72 at night or 92 during the day), but cherries don't seem to have that problem. Some heat tolerant slicers bred in Texas (Porter, Rutgers) or Florida (Solar Fire, Homestead) may set fruit an extra week or two longer than other types, as do the heirlooms Arkansas Traveler and Hillbilly Potato Leaf.

### **Q: What is the best producer?**

A: Cherries, because they can produce through the heat while others can't.

### **Q: What causes blossom end rot/cracking on my tomatoes?**

A: Blossom end rot: uneven watering and/or unavailability of calcium (see Tomatoes handout).

Cracking: uneven watering, heavy rain or just plain heat.

To help avoid both, water deeply and infrequently and add a thick layer of mulch.

### **Q: When should I plant?**

A: That depends on how much you like to gamble. Tomatoes are killed by frost, but if you plant after all danger of frost is past, you may not get any tomatoes due to the heat. If you plant early, you'll have to cover in case of frost, but at least you'll have a much better chance of getting fruit.

### **Q: What do the letters VFN/VFFN stand for?**

A: Pests or diseases the variety is resistant to. V = verticillium wilt; F and FF = fusarium wilt races 1 and 2; A = alternaria leaf spot; N = root knot nematodes.

### **Q: Which ones are heirlooms?**

A: We'll post a list.

### **Most popular tomatoes:**

Cherries, currants and grapes: Sungold, Juliet, Sweet 100 & Million, Large Red Cherry, Yellow Pear.

Canning (paste, plum): Roma, San Marzano

Slicing (heirloom): Cherokee Purple, Black Krim, Green Zebra, Brandywine (pink isn't a good producer, red is), Hillbilly Potato Leaf, Mortgage Lifter

Slicing (hybrid): Celebrity, Early Girl, Big Boy, Better Boy, Super Fantastic