

TomatoFest® Organic Garden Seeds

A Legacy of Heirloom Tomato Seeds for the Future -

Every Seed A Possibility™

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HOW TO START YOUR SEEDS

Sow your certified organic* heirloom tomato seeds 6-8 weeks before planting in the garden.

Avoid planting too early to prevent plants from becoming root-bound or spindly. Use shallow flats or cell containers on a plastic planting tray filled with a sterilized plant mix. (I prefer a good artificial soil mix rather than real soil which may carry harmful bacteria and doesn't hold water as well.) Dampen the artificial soil mix before putting mix into cells. Tamp down mix to get air out. Plant your seeds a maximum of 1/4-inch deep. (I advise planting 20% more seeds than the number of plants you'll want to allow for seeds that may not germinate or seedlings that become damaged. And it's generally pretty easy to find a home for seedlings you won't be using.) Dampen soil mix thoroughly with a gentle drizzling of water. Put the tray into a loose-fitting plastic bag (leaving the end open for circulation). The best soil temperature for tomato seed germination is between 75 and 80 degrees. You may need to supply your seeds some bottom heat to warm the soil sufficiently with the help of an electric warming grow mat. (I've found that a heating pad, like for your back, has worked well on a low setting. Make sure you cover this with plastic to protect from water contact.) If temperature is kept consistently and sufficiently warm your seeds should germinate with 5 to 12 days. (Some varieties need more time to germinate.) When seeds start coming up remove tray from plastic bag.

Provide adequate light for seedlings (8-10 hours each day). The light your seedlings receive on a windowsill may be adequate but most often is insufficient and may lead to leggy growth as a result of seedlings stretching for sunlight. If you have no other light source than a windowsill, turn your seedlings regularly. For ideal growth, set up full spectrum grow lights or white florescent lights just a few inches above the seedlings. Research has proven that lowering seedlings' night-time temperature (50-60 degrees) and occasionally brushing your hands gently across the tops of the seedlings a couple minutes a day will contribute to stronger plants. Do not over water, especially when seeds are germinating, as this may lead to a fungal disease that may cause your seedlings to die. Soil should be evenly moist at planting time, but permitted to dry slightly on top before rewatering. Drain off water collected in planting tray so that seedlings are not sitting in water. A weak fertilizer (like a liquid mix of kelp and fish emulsion) should be applied to seedlings every few days till transplanting outside. To reduce the risk of transplanting shock, your seedlings should be gradually conditioned to the outdoor elements for about a week or two before planting in the garden. Begin with 1 to 2 hours of exposure to the outdoors each day, then increase the time slowly until you can leave them out day and night.

For additional growing information go to: <http://www.tomatofest.com/tomato-growing-information.html>

Happy planting and tomato blessings,



Gary Ibsen and Dagma Lacey

*CCOF- California Certified Organic Farmers