

Article 1 – OUTSTANDING TOMATOES FOR PNW HOME GARDENS



The best tomatoes for Pacific Northwest gardens mature within 60 to 75 days from transplanting – this maximizes their fruiting period, and has them producing before the arrival of the cooler night temperatures common to the second and third weeks of August which facilitate Late Blight (that can severely slow the growth of, or kill, tomato plants). These tomatoes tend to be either cherry or small to medium-sized (5 cm to 10 cm). Here are a few suggestions:

Stood the test of time:

‘Celebrity’ ‘Super Fantastic’, ‘Oregon Spring, ‘Early Girl’

Mature in 60 to 75 days from transplanting; disease-resistant and flavorful; medium-sized, red tomatoes bred specifically for the PNW climate

Noted for excellence:

‘Cosmonaut Volkov’ –if you love beefsteaks (which are difficult to grow in our local growing conditions), these are easy to grow, faster to mature and equally luscious.

‘Mountain Magic’ – comparable to sweet, flavourful Campari-type tomatoes; bred by tomato guru, Randy Gardner, who specializes in tomatoes for home gardens with high Late Blight resistance; William Dam Seeds reports that this is their most Late Blight-resistant tomato

‘Green Zebra’ – a new hybrid bred from old heritage tomatoes by Tom Wagner of Oregon; elevated to celebrity status by Chez Panisse in Berkeley due to its unique lemon and apple flavours and its catchy green and yellow-streaked fruit.

‘Tigarella’ – a striped orange and red (RHS Award of Garden Merit AGM)

‘Stupice’ – a productive, unfussy tomato with outstanding flavour that grows well without high water or fertilizer needs; grown by CSA Goosefoot Farms, Quadra Island (owned by the late Mike Nassichuk’s son and daughter-in-law)

‘Juane Flamme’ – persimmon orange skin and flesh

‘Principe Borghese’ – small Italian heirloom with concentrated rich flavour; good fresh, in sauces or dried

‘Amish Paste’ or **‘San Moranzo’** – great flavour for eating fresh, cooking, making paste or drying.

‘Sweet Heart’ – small, firm fruit packed full of sweet flavour

Cherry Tomatoes:

Cherry tomatoes produce fruit within 60 to 65 days of transplanting.

‘Sungold’ – start here If you want to grow only one type of tomato (fist fights broke out over this tomato at Granville Island when it first came out); tropical fruit sweetness

‘Sweet Million’ – a long-time favourite; a large plant with long tresses of fruit that needs a strong tomato cage for support

‘Gardener’s Delight’ – the most popular heritage cherry produces clusters of 6-12 fruit until late October

For a pot or hanging basket:

The appropriate tomato plants for pots or hanging baskets are 30 cm to 45 cm tall and have well-controlled growth without side shoots. These plants don't need staking and either cascade (especially well-suited to hanging baskets) or grow upright. These smaller plants mature in 50 to 60 days from transplanting.

Unfortunately, **'Tiny Tim'**, **'Tumbling Tom'**, **'Tumbler'** and **'Siderno'**, the most commonly available transplants for pots and hanging baskets, all have limited flavour and are often thick skinned; they nonetheless are still superior in flavor to that of store-bought tomatoes. These tomatoes should be picked when fully ripe to allow for full flavour development.

'Balconi', **'Red Cascade'**, and **'Losetto'** (which has the longest production season and is the first blight-resistant tumbler) all have superior flavour, but are not commonly available as transplants. Thompson & Morgan sell seed for these plants and for a wide range of tomato seed.

For a Challenge:



'Cherokee Purple'

Experienced tomato growers may take on the challenge of growing long season tomatoes (70 to 90 days from transplanting), including large heirlooms and beefsteaks, looking for a robust, old-fashioned flavour. Doing so requires getting mature transplants into the ground; planting out early with temperature protection like 'Wall of Water', cloches or greenhouses; finding a hot spot in a garden with reflected light; pruning leaves; hand pollinating; and keeping water off the plants (particularly when Late Blight spores appear).



'Black Beauty'



'Gold Medal'

**Some Favourite Long Season Tomatoes
Commonly available as transplants:**

'Brandywine' – this most popular heirloom tomato is large, juicy, and sweet and is available in shades of pink, red, black and yellow

'Black Krim' – an extremely juicy tomato with a complex flavour, commonly described as “burgundy wine” or “sweet, rich and smoky”

'Cherokee Purple' – with dusty pink and purple tones, and an outstanding acid-sweet flavour

Not available as transplants:

'Black Beauty'– this award-winning tomato is considered to be the blackest tomato available; has a black skin and deep red flesh and a flavour described as rich, smooth and savory with earthy tone; the flavour improves with room-temperature storage (seed available from Baker Creek Heritage Seeds)

'Gold Medal' – has an abundant flavour, yellow fruit flushed with pink, yellow flesh inside (seed available from Seed Saver's Exchange)



West Coast Seeds has some comprehensive articles on local tomato-growing, including easy steps to prevent Late Blight:

About Tomatoes

www.westcoastseeds.com/blogs/garden-wisdom/tomatoes

How to Grow Tomatoes from Seed

www.westcoastseeds.com/blogs/how-to-grow/grow-tomato-seeds