

More Than You Ever Wanted to Know about Tomatoes!

You can choose trial-tested tomatoes right now at Lael's Moon Garden. Nothing is better than garden fresh ripe tomatoes (as opposed to the styrofoam ones you get in stores.) We have been doing tomato trials in recent summers and have stocked varieties that we know will grow and produce here.

Last summer was particularly difficult for tomatoes because it was so cool. Although they weren't as productive as in a normal summer, the following varieties produced quality ripe tomatoes in our trials even last year: Early Girl, Brandywine, Roma, Big Beef, Sun Sugar, and Sweet Million. So those are the varieties we have in stock now! We also tried many other varieties (including Legend, Oregon Spring, Gold Brandywine and Stupice) with, er, lesser results.

Last summer was a special challenge for those of you who grow tomatoes in the ground. You might be interested in the way we do our trials. It works!



First, we don't plant tomatoes outside until around Memorial Day. They just won't grow until the weather warms. It's better to keep your seedling starts in a warm, brightly lit, frost free place until conditions are right outside. On warm days, you can put them outside to harden, though.

Second, we grow tomatoes in full sun in tall narrow black nursery pots filled with new compost. Tomatoes like sun and heat which are sometimes in short supply here. The black pots heat up in the sun to warm the roots as well as the tops. We even put the pots on black ground cover fabric to maximize heat. We use tomato cages in the pots.

Third, we fertilize with organic Pacific Gro fish fertilizer at intervals shown on the label. In comparison trials last year we found that plants fertilized with Pacific Gro produced more ripe fruit than plants fertilized with other fertilizers.



Link (<http://www.pacificgro.com/>)





This year we are trialing another kind of organic fertilizer called Nutri-Rich. It is great for garden vegetables, but we haven't tried it on tomatoes before. Nutri-Rich is pelletized chicken manure with lime. It has a 4.3.3. nutrient analysis and an OMRI rating. Do not confuse it with the poultry litter sold in box stores which are mostly wood shavings.

(Link <http://www.stutzman-environmental.com/suprgreen.htm>)

Fourth, we water consistently. Sporadic watering can result in split fruit. Also too much water can cool the soil excessively and too little will wilt the plant or give it that doornail look. Containers dry out faster than ground soil does, so water must be managed carefully in pots. Customers frequently ask how often to water. Of course that depends on the weather, so simple answers about watering frequency can be misleading. Here's the best guidance. Water well when planting and after a few days check the soil with your finger. When the top $\frac{3}{4}$ " of the soil dries out (up to the first knuckle on your finger), water well again. When watering, wet the soil not the foliage. Wet foliage can foster diseases.

Fifth, harvest fruit as soon as it's fully ripe so the plant's energy can go toward ripening green fruit.

We also grow our peppers in containers, following the same general practices. In fact we do much of our veggie gardening in pots. Container gardening of veggies has the following advantages.

- ✓ Control the soil mix – thus reducing the chances of blights and other soil borne diseases;
- ✓ Black pots heat up faster so the soil is warmer,
- ✓ Pots are easier to weed and protect from insects.
- ✓ They are portable, locate in the sunniest spot
- ✓ Harvesting is easier,
- ✓ And we can even store (over winter) mature potatoes, carrots, leeks and such in the barn in the same pots that we grew them in – the pots become the “root cellar”

(Tomato and Pepper descriptions begin on the next page)



Tomato and Pepper Descriptions



Big Beef – 80 days - Indeterminate

1994 ALL-AMERICA SELECTIONS AWARD.

Big, red, meaty fruit on large plants. Impressive yields of extra-large, smooth tomatoes with real old-time flavor. Great disease resistance, early harvests and fruit that stays enormous even at the end of a long season.

Brandywine – 85 Days - Indeterminate

An heirloom variety. It produces medium-sized, slightly flattened, smooth pink-red fruit that are juicy and loaded with intense tomato flavor.



Early Girl - 75 days - Indeterminate

Dependable large harvests of flavorful, solid medium, red fruit. Disease resistance is good, contributing to its excellent performance in almost any climate. A proven variety for delicious, early tomatoes.

Roma – 78 Days

This Roma tomato variety is one of the most popular for canning, tomato paste and puree. Fruit is plum-shaped approximately 3-1/2 inches long x 1-1/2 inches, borne in clusters. Roma tomato has a mild flavor and is nearly seedless. Resistant to Fusarium Wilt and Verticillium.





Sun Sugar – 62 days - Indeterminate

Plant produces heavy yields of very flavorful and juicy orange cherry tomatoes. Tomatoes grow in clusters and turn orange when mature. This variety has thin skin and is crack resistant. Very sweet and flavorful. Excellent in salads or eaten alone as a treat. Disease Resistant.

Sweet Million – 65-75 days - Indeterminate

Plant produces heavy yields of 1" red cherry tomatoes. Very sweet and flavorful. Disease and crack Resistant. Excellent for salads and snacks.



Pepper Varieties



Poblano - 75 Days

Heart shaped, medium sized fruit, harvest when glossy green, or can be left on plant until turn red. Mild heat level.

Note: dried poblano peppers are called Ancho and often used in chili powder.

Green Bell – 70-80 Days

Medium to deep green fruit ripens to red. Sweet pepper flavor.

