

Tomatoes

If you don't have a greenhouse and are planting your tomatoes outside, choose a warm, sunny spot near a sheltered wall, which helps protect them from prevailing winds. Soil should be deep, fertile, well dug and enriched with organic matter. Always harden your plants off before planting (leave them outside for a few days before planting). When removing the plants from the pots, be careful not to disturb their roots, Water them well before and after.

There are several varieties to choose from when selecting a **tomato**

Bush – such as **Roma** will tumble and ramble around the garden and most stems will happily fall and lie against the earth for support.

Grafted – usually popular flavours grafted onto the rootstock of strong disease resistant varieties. They can grow rather big, so give them plenty of room.

Standard varieties – These are grown to develop a single stem, supported by a stake or strings. You need to pinch out the laterals (the little leaves that appear between the leaf and stalk). And you can pinch out the main growing tip when you feel it's high enough. These varieties include **Money Maker**, **Big Beef**, **Cherry Tomatoes** and other heirloom varieties.

Dwarf tomatoes can easily be planted in a pot outside your kitchen or a tumbling tomato does well in a put or a basket. Remember to use a good quality potting mix or a tomato mix.

All tomatoes need regular watering, mornings are better and try keeping the leaves dry. Remember that tomatoes are a bit of “hypochondriacs” they tend to get sick with everything! So watch out for aphids as they can also spread viruses and fungal diseases.

Don't overwater them when young, but water regularly when in full swing. When first fruit appear begin to feed with high-potash fertiliser. In between feed with fish and seaweed liquid fertilisers, mulch around them to prevent drying with compost or straw. Also, try some companion plants that will keep your tomatoes healthy and happy, such as basil, petunias, marigolds, nasturtiums, oregano, feverfew, and onions.

