

Tips for Home Gardeners

Tomatoes

Begin transplanting in mid-March in south Louisiana after the danger of frost is over. Be prepared to cover early transplanted tomatoes in case of a frost. Spray tomatoes every 7-10 days with a fungicide (daconil or maneb) and an insecticide (sevin malathion or thiodan).

Plant tomatoes in a well-drained site that receives plenty of sunlight, at least 7 to 8 hours. When tomatoes receive too little sunlight, few blossoms are formed, and many that do form fall off before setting any fruit. Space tomato plants 18 to 24 inches apart. When transplanting, pour about one cupful of a starter solution in the hole. Make your own by mixing $\frac{1}{2}$ cup of a complete fertilizer (8-8-8) in 2 $\frac{1}{2}$ gallons of warm water and stir. Commercial soluble fertilizers are also available. This will encourage a strong root system and faster growth.



Tomato vines may be determinate or indeterminate. Indeterminate types are long and vining and will continue to grow. Prune to maintain one vigorous stem. Determinates have very productive vines that grow to heights of 4 feet. Stems end in a flower cluster. Determinates should be pruned only once or twice up to the first cluster.

Indeterminate varieties which grow well here are Better Boy, Big Beef (large) AAS, Carmello, Champion, Fantastic, First Lady, Hawaiian Hybrid, Husky Gold (dwarf), Jet Star (low acid) Monte Carlo, Pink Girl (pink), Pole King, Spring Giant (AAS), Sweet Chelsea (cherry) and Terrific.

Recommended determinate types for Louisiana include Bingo, Carnival, Celebrity, (AAS), Cherry Express (cherry), Daybreak, Floramerica, (AAS), Heatwave, Macero II (roma), Merced and Mountain Delight.

Weekly applications of a general purpose fungicide (daconil or maneb) and insecticide (sevin or thiodan) starting at first bloom till harvest will protect the foliage and improve the yield on tomatoes.