



What's New Zealand's most popular fruit? You guessed it; it's the tasty tomato! Tomatoes boast a higher yield for space occupied than many other fruits, and they come in a wide variety of shapes, sizes, colours and flavours.

Tomatoes require about three months of warm weather to produce a good crop. In warm climates the best months to start are August through to November and in cooler climates September through to December. The preferred growing temperatures are between 18° and 22°C, but tomatoes can survive if it occasionally drops to 5°C but won't survive at freezing level without strong frost protection. These sun-loving plants will grow in light or heavy soils but best results are gained in a well dug-over area that is rich in compost and has good drainage.

If you're short on space tomatoes also grow well in containers. PB 28 or PB 40 planter bags filled with Oderings Shrub & Tub or Oderings Fruit & Veggie Mix will give adequate room to grow and produce a good crop of fruit for your summer pleasure.

Why Mega Tom grafted tomatoes are great!

The main reason Mega Tom grafted tomatoes are so great is the high yield. They produce at least twice the amount of fruit as a normal tomato. Having been grafted onto a strong rootstock they also have a greater disease resistance and therefore require less spraying. Less chemicals and more fruit; what more could you ask for?

How to Water

Give tomatoes plenty of water directly onto the soil, not over the leaves as this can encourage disease and burning in hot weather. A good idea is to water early in the morning and if needed again in the afternoon. A layer of mulch will help retain moisture in the soil. Remember to water a little less at harvest time to make fruit sweeter and tastier.

What to Feed and When

You should start fertilising your tomatoes when they reach one metre tall or when they start fruiting. I recommend using Wally's Secret Tomato Food; not only does it feed your tomatoes but it has added neem granules, which help to prevent pests from invading your plants. Apply every three to six weeks.

Psyllids!

The psyllid goes through three stages in their development: egg, nymph and adult.

The eggs usually appear in clusters on the undersides of the leaves and look like sugar.

Once the eggs have hatched they become nymphs, which are lime green and about 3mm long. This is the stage that causes the most damage. Nymphs suck and feed on the sap of your potatoes and tomatoes, which damages the leaves by removing nutrients from the plant, and inject a toxin during feeding. The leaves then curl and turn yellow or purple. This can result in an undersized crop or even death to the plant.



Control: It is really important to begin control measures early and carry out regular spraying throughout the season. If allowed to establish they will be hard to control so a preventative spray programme is the key. I recommend you use Mavrik, Success Ultra or Crop Cover. For organic prevention use Neem granules applied at three- to six-week intervals. Remember when spraying to fully cover the undersides of the leaves. If your plant has psyllid damage, remove and destroy.

Please refer to our "Tomato Doctor" brochure for any other pest, disease and disorder problems.

How to train your tomato

First thing to start with is a nice sturdy stick. When you tie your plants to the stick, you want to use something soft that won't cut into the stem as the plant grows. Once the tomato has reached 1.8m, the top of your stake or the top of your greenhouse, pinch out the tips. All laterals must also come off. Too many shoots inhibit fruit development; therefore, lateral shoots need to be removed regularly. Laterals are the side shoots that grow out from the nodes of the plant. They should all be carefully pinched out or snipped off.



What type should I choose?

Cherry or cocktail tomatoes range in size from the size of your thumbnail to the size of a golf ball. They are generally very sweet in flavour and produce a large quantity of fruit. Sweet 100 is a popular choice.

Low-acid or acid-free tomatoes are ideal for people who can suffer from acid reflux. There are a few varieties that fall into this category; Dr Walter and Roma are some classics.

Large Beefsteak style tomatoes are perfect for people who like a large slice of tomato in their hamburger or sandwich. These giants of the tomato family usually weigh in at anywhere from 130g to a whopping 350g.

Medium-size fruiteders are the good all-rounders of tomato varieties. Their fruit is usually medium round with weights of approximately 100g. Money Maker is the most popular medium-size tomato.

Dwarf tomatoes are perfect for keen gardeners who are short on space. Generally growing to under a metre tall they barely require a stick for support.

Hanging Basket varieties are another good idea for small gardens. These interesting tomatoes usually have cherry-size fruit which hang down on long trusses. Fantastic for salads and snacks.

Our wonderful staff at Oderings Garden Centres are here to help with any further info you may require, to get you on your way to tomato success!



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Tomatoes

