



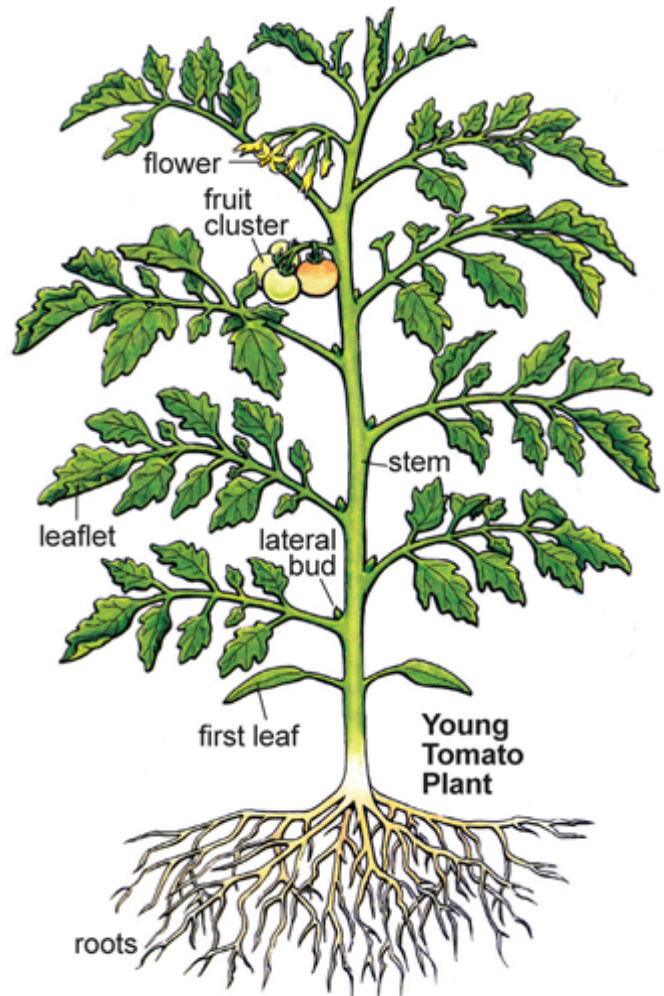
TOMATO TALKING POINTS

2. A Slice of Tomato History

- **The first tomatoes can be traced back to the Andes in Peru**, where they grew wild as cherry-sized berries. As early as 700 A.D., the Incas and Aztecs began cultivating tomato plants.
- Mexico's Aztecs and Mayans gave the tomato its name, first "xitomatle," then "tomatle" or "tomati."
- **In the mid-1500s, Spanish conquistadors carried tomato seeds back to Europe.** Throughout **Southern Europe, the tomato was quickly accepted into the kitchen**, where they were embraced in Italy, Spain, and Portugal. Yet as it moved north, more resistance was apparent. In 17th and 18th century England, tomatoes were believed to be poisonous. (Eating the stems and leaves may cause illness and should be avoided.)
 - "...most Europeans thought that the tomato was poisonous because of the way plates and flatware were made in the 1500's.
 - Rich people in that time used flatware made of pewter, which has a high-lead content. Foods high in acid, like tomatoes, would cause the lead to leech out into the food, resulting in lead poisoning and death. Poor people, who ate off of plates made of wood, did not have that problem, and hence did not have an aversion to tomatoes. This is essentially the reason why tomatoes were only eaten by poor people until the 1800's, especially Italians.
 - What changed in the 1800's? First, and most significantly, was the mass immigration from Europe to America and the traditional blending of cultures. Many Italian-Americans ate tomatoes and brought that food with them. But also, and perhaps equally as important, was the invention of pizza. There is no pizza without tomato sauce, and pizza was invented around Naples in the late 1880's. The story goes that it was created by one restaurateur in Naples to celebrate the visit of Queen Margarine, the first Italian monarch since Napoleon conquered Italy. The restaurateur made the pizza from three ingredients that represented the colors of the new Italian flag: red, white, and green. The red is the tomato sauce, the white was the mozzarella cheese, and the green was the basil topping. Hence, Pizza Margarine was born, and is still the standard for pizza. And what could have led more to the popularity of the tomato than pizza!"
- The earliest reference to tomatoes being grown in British North America is from 1710, when herbalist William Salmon reported seeing them in what is today South Carolina.
- Thomas Jefferson, who ate tomatoes in Paris, sent some seeds back to America and was one of the first Americans to grow tomatoes at his Virginia home as early as 1781.
- By 1812, tomatoes were gaining in popularity among Louisiana Creoles who used them in jambalayas and gumbos and Maine cooks who added them to seafood dishes.
- George Washington Carver believed tomatoes had "medicinal virtues." After World War I, he issued "115 Ways to Prepare It [Tomatoes] For the Table" thus marking the introduction of the tomato into popular culture.

3. How Do Tomatoes Grow?

- The tomato is a warm-weather perennial plant, sensitive to frost at any stage of growth. There are two types of tomato plants, bush tomatoes and vine tomatoes.
- Select several varieties that mature at different times to extend your harvest.
- If you don't purchase plants, start seeds indoors in flats or pots 6 to 7 weeks before the average last frost date, and set out transplants when the soil is warm and all danger of frost is past.
- Select a site in full sun (except in very hot climates, where some shading will be desirable to prevent blossom drop).
- Varieties are commonly divided into these categories, based mostly on shape, use, and size (small to large):
 - **Cherry:** sweet tomatoes, usually eaten whole in salads
 - **Plum:** pear-shaped, more meaty, ideal for tomato products, also called Italian or Roma
 - **Slicing:** round or globe-shaped, used mainly for commerce and processed products
 - **Beefsteak:** round, juicy, used mainly for sandwiches
- Other varieties include heirlooms, green, orange, and yellow tomatoes. Yellow and orange tomatoes tend to be sweeter than red and green varieties; only red tomatoes, which contain a red pigment, contain lycopene. Last, if you love that tomato flavor but the acid messes with your stomach, try yellow or white tomatoes. These pale-faces are less acidic (sometimes much less) than their vivid counterparts. However, these do not have the healthy lycopene.



4. What Season do we pick Tomatoes?

- For growing tomatoes at home in South Dakota many people buy plants at the greenhouse for planting typically in late April or early May to avoid any late frosts. Or you can plant seeds in March and keep in a warm place so that the plants are ready to plant in April or May.
- Tomatoes like heat so planting near a garage or house on the south side works well.

- A common problem that can occur when growing tomatoes is blossom-end rot which is caused by a calcium deficiency. Crushed egg shells tilled into the soil before planting, or even fall before is a natural way to boost calcium levels throughout the growing season.
- Flowers often form in late spring and early summer but usually don't have much fruit and the fruit doesn't ripen very quickly.
- The heat in July and August causes the plants to flourish and begin the massive production phase. Like many fruits and veggies, tomatoes are either determinate (one big crop ripens at the same time) or indeterminate (fruit/veggie continue to develop over an extended period for more sustained harvest).
- **Most tomatoes in South Dakota gardens are picked in August and September.**
- Once frost is coming you can pick green tomatoes and place in a brown paper sack in a dark, cool room that allows them to continue to ripen for a few weeks after cold weather has killed the plant.
- Near Chamberlin, SD there is a family-run hydroponic operation, where they grow tomatoes in a greenhouse for harvest during late spring through the late summer.
<http://happyhydrosllc.com/default.htm>

5. Reasons to Eat Tomatoes

- A ½ cup of sliced tomato is:
 - A good source of vitamin C which helps heal cuts and wounds and helps lower the risk of infection.
 - A good source of vitamin A, which helps maintain good vision, fight infection, and keep skin healthy.
 - A source of vitamin K and potassium.
 - Rich in **lycopene***, which is a type of phytonutrient called a carotenoid.
- Champion sources of lycopene include pink grapefruit, salsa, tomatoes, tomato products, and watermelon. Lycopene gives these fruits and vegetable their reddish color.
- Lycopene is a carotenoid, which is an antioxidant that may decrease the risk of certain cancers and heart disease and also help to keep the immune system healthy.
- Lycopene cannot be produced in the body so it can only be obtained by eating lycopene-rich foods.
- Cooked tomato products, sauces, and juices contain higher amounts of lycopene than raw tomatoes due to greater concentration (i.e., it takes many cups of raw tomatoes to make one cup of tomato sauce, and thus the lycopene concentration is greater).

6. How do you pick a good Tomato?

- Look for tomatoes that are firm and give slightly to gentle pressure.
- Store ripened tomatoes at room temperature, out of direct sunlight. Use within a few days.
- Place unripe tomatoes in a brown paper bag until ripe, usually 1-3 days.

- Before serving, wash tomatoes in cold water and remove any stems or leaves.
- Processing tomatoes are mechanically harvested when ripe as opposed to fresh tomatoes which are hand-harvested (generally before they are fully ripe but sometimes vine-ripened). The processing tomatoes have thicker skins and a firmer consistency, enabling it to be mechanically picked when ripe without damaging the fruit.

Fun Facts:

- There are more than 4,000 varieties of tomatoes ranging in size, shape, and color.
- Tomatoes are grown in every state in the United States.
- Tomatoes are also the most popular home grown fruit or vegetable.
- From the Botanist (scientist that studies plants) point of view, the tomato is a fruit. In the 1893 U.S. Supreme Court case of “Nix v. Hedden,” the tomato was declared a vegetable, along with cucumbers, squashes, beans, and peas (all also botanically considered fruit.) This came about as a result of tariff laws in 1887, which imposed a duty on vegetables but not fruits.
- According to USDA, Americans eat more than 22 pounds of tomatoes each year, more than half of this amount in the form of ketchup and/or tomato sauce.
- At first, tomatoes were used by our European ancestors as tabletops and ornamental plants, since they were widely believed to be poisonous (due to their belonging to the same family of the poisonous plant *belladonna*)
- **What can be made from tomatoes? Try one of these today!**
 - Ketchup
 - Salsa
 - Tomato soup
 - Tomato juice
 - Tomato sauce
 - Tomato paste
 - Spaghetti sauce
- The tomato is a berry of the nightshade family, which includes potatoes, eggplants, and peppers. The word “tomato” is derived from the Nahuatl (Aztec language) word, *tomatl*, meaning “something round and plump.” Over the years, the tomato has endured many names including “love apple,” “golden apple,” “apple of paradise,” and even “devil apple” by those who believed the tomato to be poisonous.

Sources:

<http://www.tomato-cages.com/tomato-history.html>

<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Tomato>

<http://www.garden.org/articles/articles.php?q=show&id=1217>