



Featured Crop

Tomato/El Tomate

Tomato Fun Facts!

- There are 10,000 varieties (different types) of tomato found around the world!
- Tomato plants have been grown in space on the International Space Station!
- The heaviest tomato weighed 7 lb 12 oz! (according to Guinness World Record)
- Because tomatoes have seeds and grow from flowering plants, they are botanically considered a fruit, not a vegetable!



Growing Tomatoes in Utah

Tomatoes love warm weather and grow well in Utah's warm summer months, but need some special care. Here are several things to keep in mind if you want to try growing your own tomatoes:

- **Choose your tomato type:** Tomatoes can be categorized by when they produce (early, midseason, or late), plant growth habit (determinate, semi-determinate, dwarf, indeterminate), fruit size (cherry – small, saladette – medium, beefsteak – large), color (red, pink, green, yellow, orange, purple, multicolored, striped), or use (slicer, paste, drying, snacking). Explore what will work best for you by reading through seed catalog descriptions!
- **Plan their garden location:** Tomatoes need 9-12 hours of sunlight to grow and the plants can get very large. Choose a spot in your garden where the plants will have lots of light and room to grow. Tomatoes can grow well in containers, so you can move them around to sunnier locations if your yard is shady.
- **Wait until it's warm:** Tomatoes should be planted once soil temperatures reach 60°F or when frost danger has passed. In Utah, wait to plant tomatoes outside until mid-May and check the weather often. You can start tomato seeds in pots indoors 6 to 8 weeks before last frost-free date or buy small plants (seedlings) from a local nursery or the WCG Spring Plant Sale!
- **Feed them well:** Tomatoes require lots of nutrients from the soil as they grow, so make sure to add some compost or worm castings to give them a boost when you plant them and in the middle of the season!

Learn more about growing tomatoes from one of [WCG's webinars](#) or from a [video we made with PBS Utah!](#)

Tomato History

- Tomatoes are a native crop from Central and South America that were domesticated over 1,500 years ago
- The English name "*tomato*" and the Spanish name "*tomate*," or "*jitomate*" in Mexico, comes from the Nahuatl (the language spoken by Aztec peoples) word "*tomatl*"
- During the Spanish colonization of the Americas in the 1500s, tomato plants and seeds spread around the world and were incorporated into other cultures' diets

Tomato Health & Nutrition Facts

Tomatoes are a nutrient-dense food that supports the whole body! Some ways they are good for you include:

- Antioxidants in tomatoes help support a strong heart, healthy skin, and can help prevent certain cancers
- Tomatoes are an excellent source of vitamins A and C, calcium, and potassium
- Cooking tomatoes makes their vitamins more available to your body to absorb and use



Have questions about tomatoes? Talk to one of our farmers! Send a letter to us at the address below or email us at FarmerPenPal@wasatchgardens.org

Activity: Save a Tomato, Name a Tomato!

Adult Supervision: 

Time: 15 minutes active, 3 days passive

Did you know that there are thousands of different kinds of tomato and each one has a special name? Some names tell you what the tomato looks like such as "Yellow Pear Tomato," where the tomato came from like "Anna Banana Russian Tomato," or even how you might eat the tomato like "Bread and Salt Tomato." Some tomatoes even have special stories that give them their names like the "Mortgage Lifter Tomato" which was bred during the Great Depression.

Do you think it would be fun to name your own tomato variety? In this activity, you will learn a little bit of what it's like to be a tomato breeder (someone who grows and saves different types of tomatoes) by saving seeds and telling your tomato's story by naming it and creating a seed packet so you can share it with others!

Materials Needed

- Tomatoes from your garden or from a local grower*
- Small glass jar
- Colander
- Paper plate
- Envelop or a piece of paper folded into a seed envelope ([click here for a pattern!](#))
- Pencil/Pen
- Markers

*If you can, check to see if your tomato is an open pollinated or a hybrid type. This will affect if the seeds will grow a tomato like the one you are saving (open pollinated) or if it might be different (hybrid).



Instructions

- **Get to know your tomato** – Observe your tomato using all your senses. Write down what you think about how the tomato looks, tastes, and any special information you know about how it grew, its history, or why you like it.
- **Save the seeds** – Squeeze the seeds out of your tomato into the glass jar. Leave it on the counter for two days or until a little bit of mold starts to grow on the pulp and the seeds sink to the bottom of the jar. Carefully pour out the pulp and rinse the seeds with water in the colander. Leave the seeds to dry on the paper plate for a couple days.
- **Name your tomato** – Write down the name of your tomato type or create a new name for your tomato variety based on your observations. Draw your tomato on the front of your seed packet.
- **Share the seeds and its story** - On the back of your seed packet, write out some details about your tomato including how it grows, how it tastes, and why you named it what you did. Save your seeds in the packet in a dry place in your house and try growing them again next year. Or trade your seeds with a friend or neighbor!

Activity Extensions:

- Look at the [Western Gardens Utah Tomato Variety list](#) or another seed catalog site (like [Snake River Seed Cooperative](#)) for inspiration & helpful tips for writing descriptions of your tomato.
- Learn more about why it is important to save seeds by exploring the information and videos on websites like [Seed Savers Exchange](#) or [Native Seeds/SEARCH](#). Why do you think we should save seeds for different plants?
- What other vegetables or fruits would you want to name and grow? What information would you tell other people on your seed packet for those?



We would love to see your work! Send us a picture of your Tomato Seed Packet to FarmerPenPal@wasatchgardens.org



Recipe: Garden-Fresh Tomato Soup

This is an easy-to-make, classic recipe made with ripe tomatoes and fresh herbs all blended up into a smooth soup that's perfect for the fall. The tomatoes are roasted with garlic and other garden ingredients to make a healthy and flavorful meal. This soup tastes great with a grilled cheese sandwich or a piece of fresh bread!



Ingredients

- 3 pounds fresh ripe tomatoes
- 4 cloves garlic, peeled
- ½ onion, diced
- ½ red bell pepper, diced
- 2 tablespoons olive oil
- salt & pepper to taste
- ½ teaspoon dried basil
- ½ teaspoon dried oregano
- 2 cups chicken or vegetable broth
- ½ cup heavy cream (optional)
- 2 tablespoons fresh herbs (basil/parsley)
- fresh basil & parsley for serving
- ¼ cup parmesan cheese (optional)

Equipment

- Stove/Oven
- Large Pan
- Medium Saucepan
- Blender or hand/stick blender
- Cutting board
- Knife

Instructions

- Preheat oven to 450°F.
- Wash and cut tomatoes (cut in half for smaller apricot sized tomatoes, cut larger tomatoes into quarters or eighths).
- Place tomatoes, garlic, onion, bell pepper on a large pan. Drizzle with olive oil and sprinkle on salt, pepper, and dried herbs.
- Roast for 25 minutes, stirring after 15 minutes. Turn oven to broil and broil 3-4 minutes or until some of the tomatoes get a little bit of char color on them.
- Bring broth to a boil in the saucepan, turn off stove, then add roasted ingredients and fresh herbs.
- Carefully transfer ingredients to the blender or use a hand blender to blend mixture until smooth and creamy. Add heavy cream (if using).
- Top with parmesan cheese, croutons or a drizzle of heavy cream. Enjoy!