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THE NEWSLETTER FOR FRIENDS HAVING FUN IN THE DIRT!

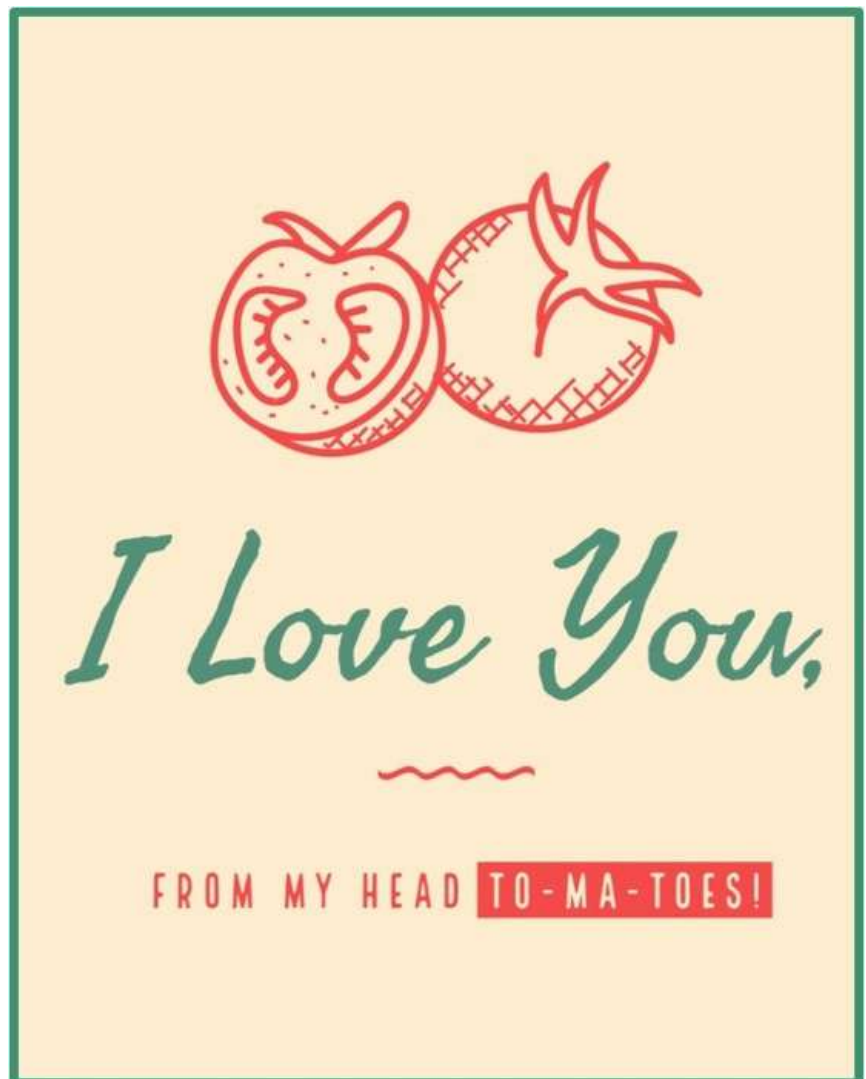
SPECIAL "TOMATO" EDITION

GORGEOUS TOMATOES DON'T GROW BY THEMSELVES!

There is nothing quite like seeing gorgeous tomatoes growing on a healthy plant - except maybe picking them.

But to help make this happen, YOU need to show your plants some "love" throughout the growing season, like by:

- pruning "specific" branches and dead leaves
- examining the plants for signs of disease or pests

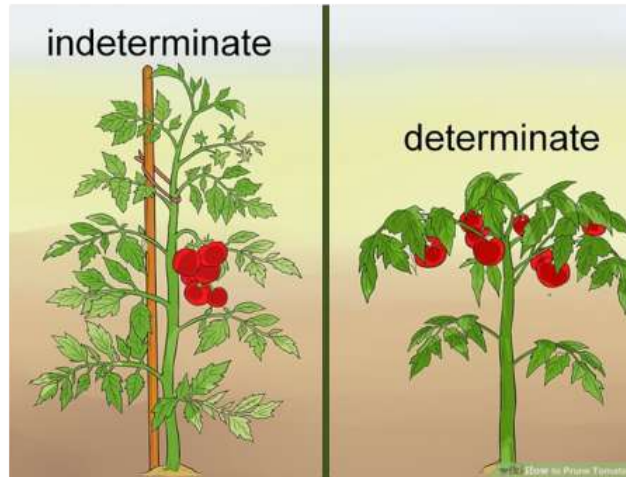


HOW TO PROPERLY PRUNE TOMATOES



STEP 1: Which type of tomato plant do you have?

- Big Boy
- Beef Master
- most Cherry varieties
- most heirloom types



GROW LIKE VINES

GROW INTO BUSH

- ACE 55
- Amelia
- Better Bush
- Heatmaster
- Mountain Pride
- Patio

STEP 2: Check for yellow leaves and stems below the first set of flowers. When you notice this color change, its time to start pruning.

STEP 3: Check for “suckers.” Regardless of plant type, look for tiny new branches sprouting in the spot where a lateral branch meets the stem. Suckers take energy from the rest of the plant and cause it to bear fewer tomatoes. To remove a sucker, grab a growing tip by the base between the thumb and forefinger and bend it back and forth until it snaps cleanly. Ideally, this should be done when the shoot is young and supple. The small wound will heal quickly.

For **INDETERMINATE** varieties. Choose four or five sturdy “trusses” to keep, then pinch out any additional side shoots. These are the branches that grow from the main stem above the first flower cluster. Leave the plant's top shoot intact, known as the “terminal shoot.” Make sure the vine-like plants are tied to supports after flowering occurs.



STEP 4: On very young plants, check for flowers. It’s a good idea to start pruning your tomato plants early, as soon as there are flowers on the plants. At this point, the plants should be between 12 and 18 inches tall.

Growing Tomatoes

words of advice & encouragement

FROM DOROTHY KREMBS, PLOT#50

Any advice I give to a **new gardener** is based on my wish that they have as much success as possible from the very beginning - so that they begin to feel confident in their new gardening venture/hobby and stay encouraged to continue next year.

Tomatoes originated in tropical regions of Central and South America where temperatures and growing conditions remain steady and consistent all through the growing season. The tomato plants we buy locally are raised for our climate, but they still remain a tricky and finicky plant to grow here. They are vulnerable to **temperature and watering fluctuations**, they are susceptible to every kind of **blight and disease**, they **require a long growing season**, and to produce good yields - **THEY REQUIRE ATTENTION**.

So, if you are determined to try growing tomatoes (as most of us are), please understand that "failure" with tomatoes is not a reflection of you personally, and it definitely does not mean you are a terrible gardener. Just learn more, and try again. And if your plants do produce, you need to check out the color of your thumbs!!!!

To increase your chances of growing gorgeous tomatoes, you must **pay close attention to your plants and attend to any issues immediately**.

Blight is a common problem, so common, that horticulturalists encourage gardeners to spray tomato plants with copper fungicide even before you spot any problem. **If you do see signs of blight, spray immediately, like NOW!!** Spraying with copper fungicide will also help guard against many other problems.

If you spot any signs of **insects on your leaves**, pick them off and crush them in your fingers and spray the plant thoroughly with insecticidal soap. With both copper fungicide and insecticidal soap, you must douse the whole plant until the **liquid is dripping from both under the leaves as well as on the tops**.

As soon as you see any **discolored or shriveling leaves**, **snip them off immediately** and dispose of them in the garbage. Do NOT put them on the compost pile, as that will spread disease.

Pinch out or break off the "**suckers**"/**spurs**. These appear at the juncture where the leaf comes out of the stem. The tomato plant shoots out these "baby plants" as insurance for their own survival. If you don't remove them, they encourage the plant to produce more leaves, rather than fruit, thereby diminishing your yield.

Tomatoes need specific amounts of water. Too much is as bad as not enough, and watering inconsistently causes inconsistent growth in the fruit, resulting in your tomatoes splitting as they ripen. Allowing the soil to feel slightly dry to the touch between watering is a good measure. However, **do not let the soil get bone dry.**

Meanwhile, lots of other vegetables are much easier for a novice gardener to grow. Planting carrots (buy seed tapes rather than seeds), bush beans, peas, lettuces, Swiss chard; and herbs like parsley, thyme, rosemary, and sage will more likely result in a self-satisfied, successful, and motivated new gardener.

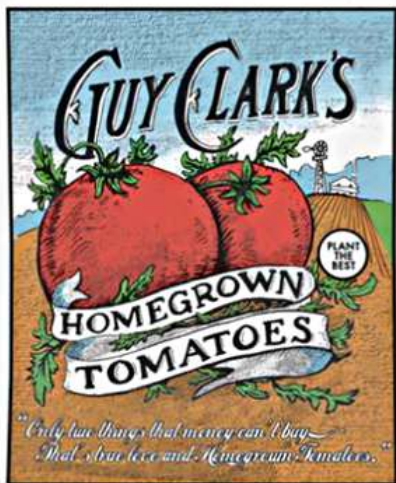
Planting flowers that you buy from a greenhouse to plant among some easier to grow veggies, or even instead of veggies, is pure pleasure and confidence boosting for a new gardener.

But, let's say the worst happens . . . your garden produces NOTHING!!! For whatever reason, it all just shriveled up and died and you're embarrassed to admit that "this bed" is yours. **Don't give up!!!** Reject any embarrassment and read more, learn more over the winter, talk to other gardeners, ask a gardening friend to help you pick out easier plants to grow next year . . . and don't be afraid to try and grow tomatoes again next year, even if your thumbs aren't bright green - yet!!!

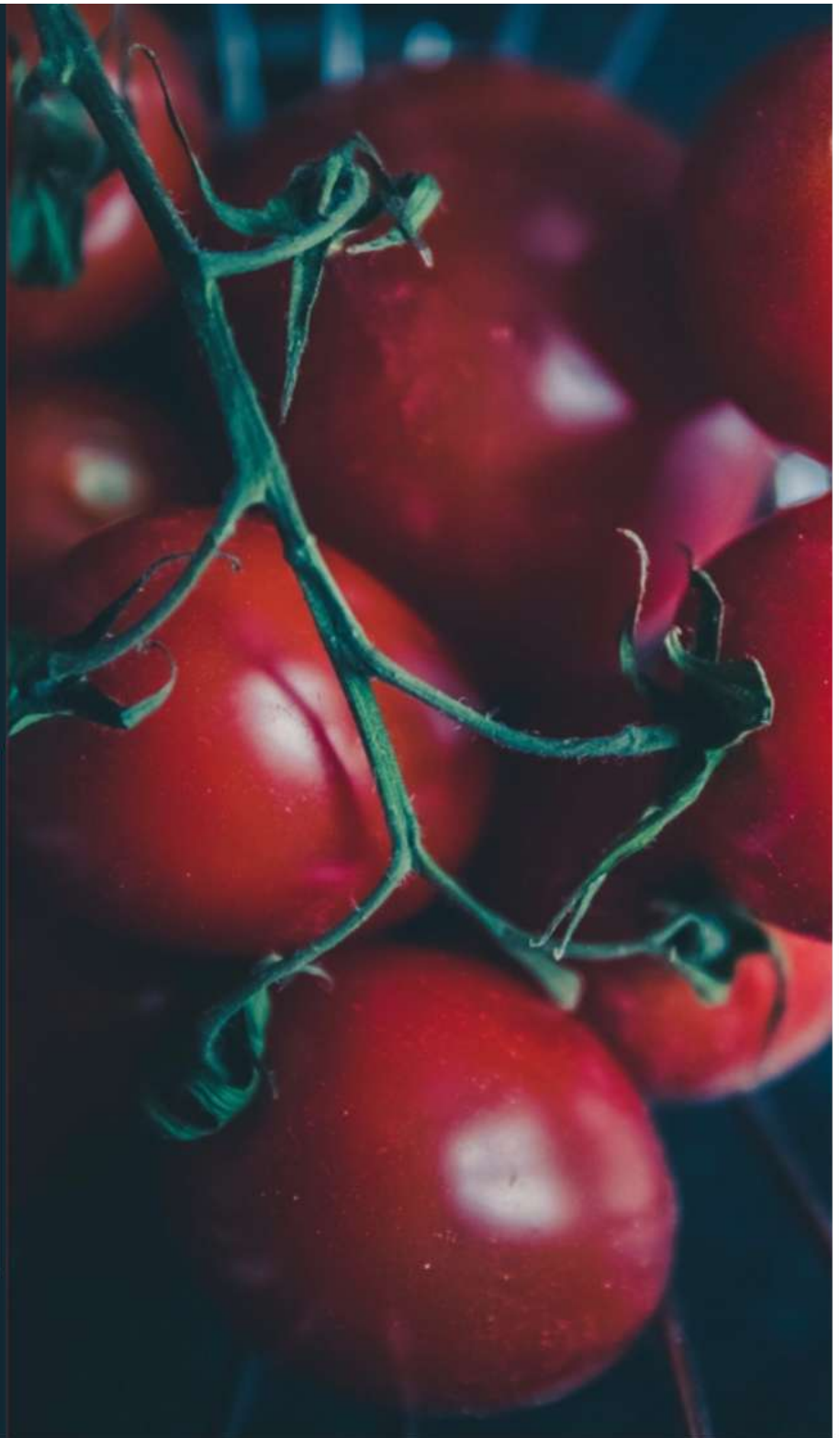
Good luck and I'll see you in the garden,
Dorothy Krembs



WHO DOESN'T LOVE HOMEGROWN TOMATOES?




CLICK ON PICTURE!



An EXCEPTIONAL Source for *EVERYTHING TOMATOES*

The Wisconsin Farm Service provides an exceptional document online (.pdf format) called “A Plain Language Guide – Growing Fresh Market Tomatoes” – check it out at: https://datcp.wi.gov/Documents/mk_fc_80_web.pdf

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