



**Smith's Acres LLC**  
4 West Main Street Niantic, CT 06357  
860-691-0528    [www.smithsacres.com](http://www.smithsacres.com)

## Top Ten Tomato Tips

Everyone agrees that there's nothing better in summer than the perfect, ripe tomato. It's easy to grow your own crop if you follow our simple tips:

- 1) Tomato plants get big, so make sure they have plenty of space. Give them each about a 3 foot circle.
- 2) Tomatoes like a very sunny location. Keep this in mind if you start your own seeds- you will probably need grow lights to provide your plants with enough light.
- 3) Tomatoes like warm soil. In our tricky New England springs, some times it pays to cheat a little in order to speed up harvest. Using a layer of black plastic on vegetable garden soil warms up the soil faster, which will make tomatoes grow faster as well. Using a "Wall-o-Water" also provides tomatoes with that extra warmth.
- 4) Tomatoes need to be planted deeply in the soil. Either dig a hole deeper than the soil ball on your plant, or push the roots down into the soil so that part of the stem is underground. This helps the plants develop better root systems. If the tomato is exceptionally tall, you can dig a trench and lay the tomato in it. Roots will grow from the stem.
- 5) Tomatoes can benefit from a layer of organic mulch to keep in moisture, and to prevent soil-borne diseases from splashing up onto the leaves. We like a layer of Winterwood Shellfish compost or Mainely Mulch, which also reduces weeds, and keeps soil warm.
- 6) Tomatoes need some grooming- once they start gaining some size, remove the bottom leaves. This will help prevent fungal infections by allowing more air circulation around the plant. Spraying plants with compost tea also helps reduce fungus problems.
- 7) Tomatoes need adequate, **consistent** watering. Get into a routine of providing water to your tomatoes. Inconsistency can lead to problems like blossom end rot. Farmer Joe suggests you use a fertilizer with some extra calcium. Calcium also helps to prevent blossom end rot. Cracking is another problem that inconsistent watering will lead to. Be extra careful if you grow your tomatoes in a pot - you need to be extra diligent with the water. Do not let the plants dry out.
- 8) Tomatoes benefit from pruning. Tomatoes produce suckers in the crotch joint between two branches. Removing these suckers provides more energy to the plants. It's also okay to remove parts of stems to allow in more light.
- 9) Tomatoes come in two types- **determinate** (plant goes only "so high" and then stops growing. Examples - the "Mountain" series of tomatoes) and **indeterminate** (plant continues to grow and there will be a longer period of harvest. Big Beef is an example of an indeterminate tomato). It's good to plant some of both to extend your harvest.
- 10) Tomatoes benefit from fertilizer like Garden Tone or any fertilizer specifically formulated for tomatoes. Incorporate a nice organic fertilizer into the soil at planting time and half way through the season top dress with a small amount of fertilizer (ring the fertilizer around the plant about 4-6 inches from the stem).