

Plump *and* Circumstance

GETTING YOUR PLANTS SET

Created by David Outerbridge, Alyssa Vinson and Heather Griffith

SITE PREPARATION

Light

6 plus hours/
day is ideal

Solarizing

Introduction to soil
solarization (edis.ifas.ufl.edu/publication/IN856)

Containers

Choose a container that is clean and prepared. Think about how much space you have and what is the easiest place for you to care for your plants.

- Pots: felt, ceramic or plastic.
- Vegetable garden
- Edible/ornamental garden
- Raised beds
- Hydroponics

Irrigation

Plan where you plant near a water source, whether you have in ground irrigation or you are planning to use a watering can or hose, make sure your garden is in a convenient location for watering.

Structure

Your tomato plants will need something to grow up and attach to. There are several options such as lattice fencing, metal tomato cages, makeshift tomato teepees with cut branches, stakes and string or any other inventive form of structure that you can come up with.

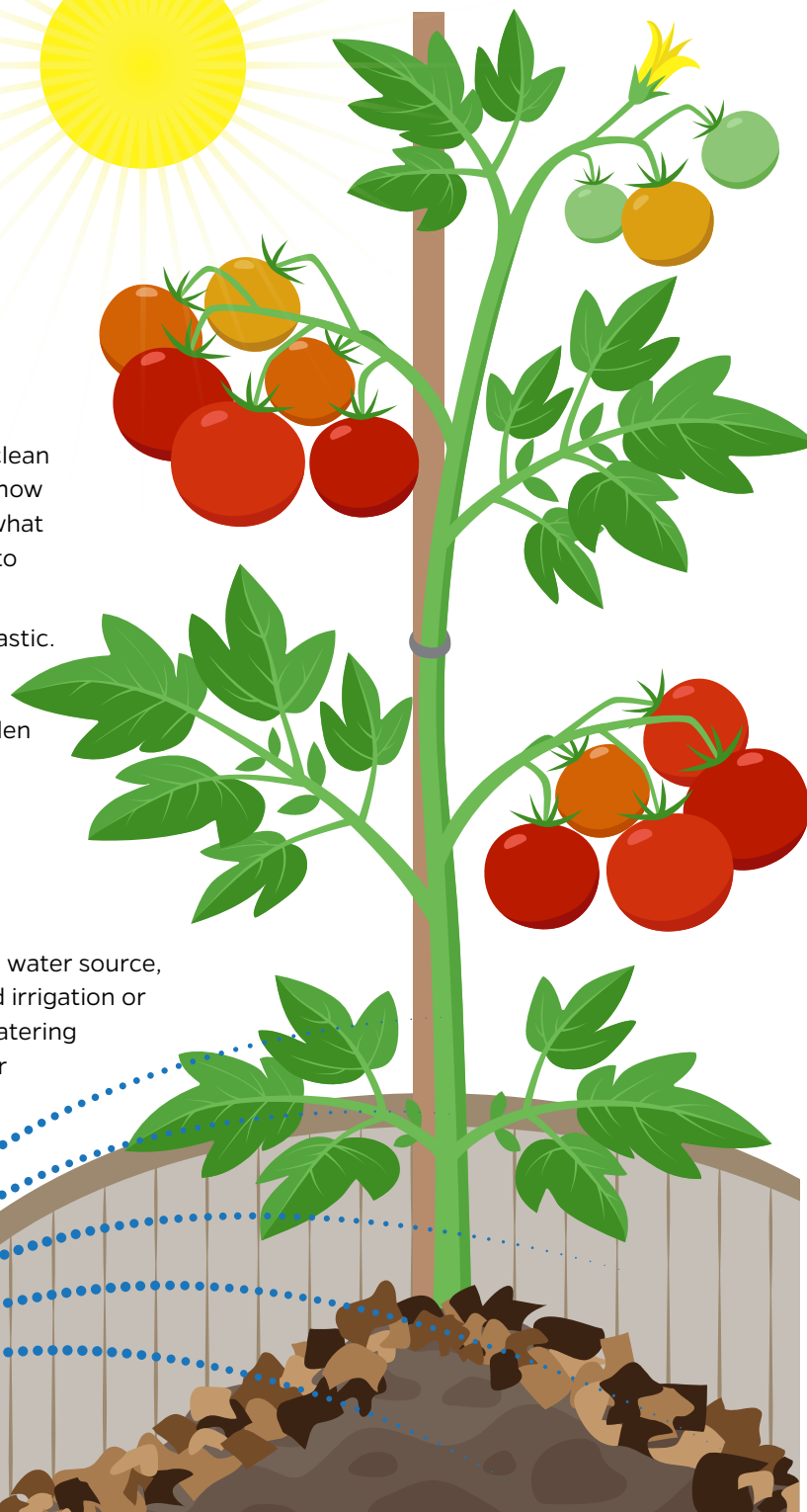
Mulch

Mulch helps retain moisture, adds organic matter to soil and helps keep weeds at bay.

- Select Florida Friendly mulch
- Mulching your vegetable garden (gardeningolutions.ifas.ufl.edu/plants/edibles/vegetables/mulching-your-vegetable-garden.html)

Soil

- PH: Ideal pH for tomatoes 6.2-6.5 but they can grow in 5.5-7.5.
- Organic matter: The more the better mix in compost (edis.ifas.ufl.edu/publication/ep323) with soil 1/10?
- Testing: Get the soil tested before you plant in garden beds. (sfyl.ifas.ufl.edu/agriculture/soil-testing/)





PROPAGATION/PLANTING / / /

Determinate or indeterminate

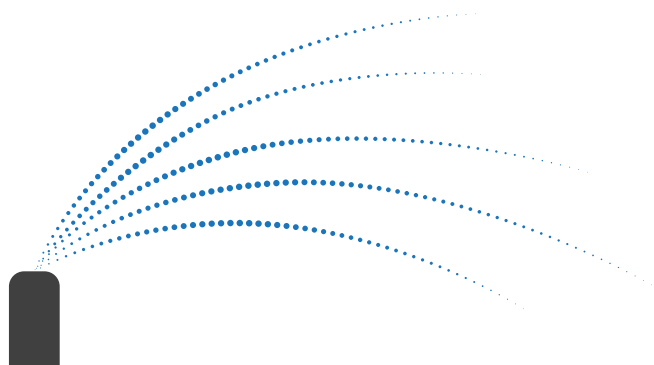
- Determinate: one crop from a compact bush like plant
- Indeterminate: production over several months from a sprawling plant

Seed selection: Select the best varieties for FL (gardeningolutions.ifas.ufl.edu/pdf/tomato_varieties_chart.pdf)

Starting: Plant the tomato seeds just below the surface of the soil and water daily. Germination will take place 6-8 days after planting.

- Seed directly in the garden (edis.ifas.ufl.edu/publication/VH026)
- Start in pots inside and plant when stem is 3x height of container.

Planting: the plants should be spaced 2' apart and planted with soil up to the base of the seedling stem.



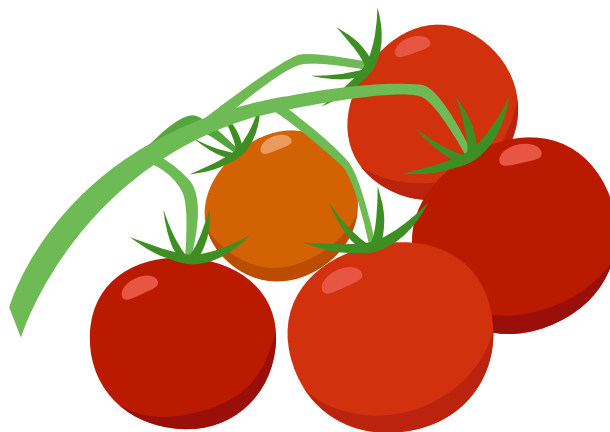
TIMING / / /

Planting tomatoes outdoors in Florida can be tricky, whether the bugs, or heat or rain, there are several seasonal considerations. The below recommendations are for direct sowing tomato seeds outdoors. For more information on planting times, check the Florida Vegetable Gardening Guide: edis.ifas.ufl.edu/publication/VH021

North: February through April or July through August

Central: January through February or August through September

South: August through February



CARE / / /

Water: Regular watering without over watering 1x daily 1-2 inches of water. Water in the mornings to reduce evaporation and chance of disease.

Fertilization: 6-8-8 Fertilize appropriately at planting time and during the growing season (edis.ifas.ufl.edu/publication/CV236)

Pinching: pinching or pruning young tomato sucker shoots helps promote vegetative growth and increase canopy density and fruit production.

Flowering: Scout regularly for pests, aphids especially love newly budding plants, water regularly and keep up your fertilization regimen.

Fruiting: Monitor for consistent watering to avoid fruit splitting and continue to scout regularly for pests.

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PESTS AND DISEASES

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PESTS

Tomato Insect Pest Management Publications:
edis.ifas.ufl.edu/entity/topic/tomato_insects

Whiteflies, aphids

Problem: nymphs of both species attack the actively growing areas of the plant and suck sap, causing leaf stippling, curling and malformation of leaves and blossoms.

Solutions: Avoid overwatering or applying excessive Nitrogen. Whiteflies and aphids have many natural predators that can be encouraged or purposefully released. Lacewings, wasps and ladybird beetles are all good options. A steady stream of water can be used to spray off aphids or whitefly nymphs.

Hornworm, fruit worm

Problem: This caterpillar can defoliate tomato plants rapidly.

Solutions: Regular scouting for this caterpillar and removing it by hand. Applying an appropriate insecticide containing *Bacillus thuringiensis*.

Stinkbugs, leaf-footed bugs

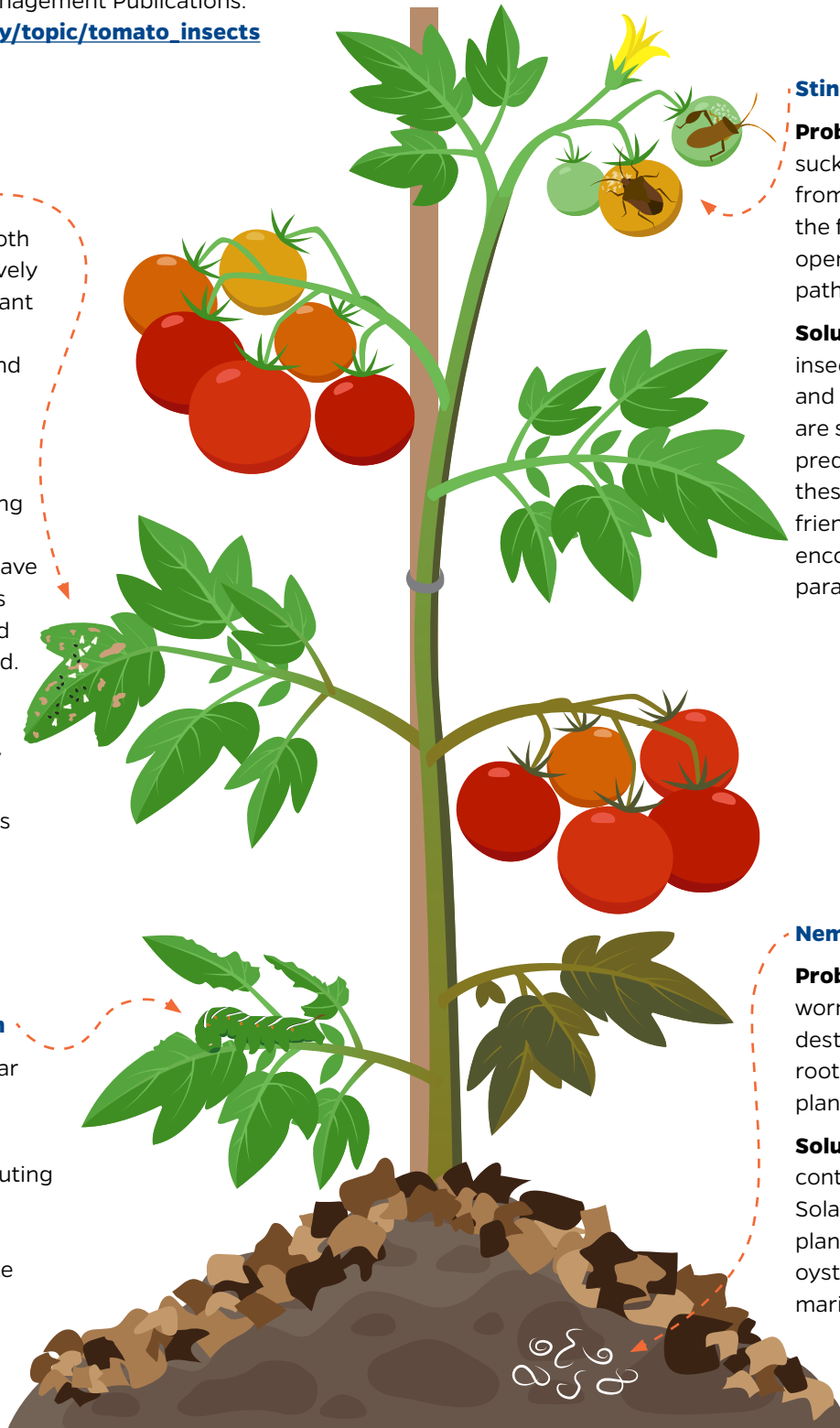
Problem: These piercing, sucking insects remove juices from young fruit, this leaves the fruit discolored and opens a pathway for fungal pathogens.

Solutions: Remove these insects by hand or with a net and dispose of them. There are several generalist insect predators that will prey on these pests, keep your yard friendly to all insects to encourage predation and parasitism.

Nematodes

Problem: These tiny worms under the soil can destroy your tomato plants' root systems and cause plants to die.

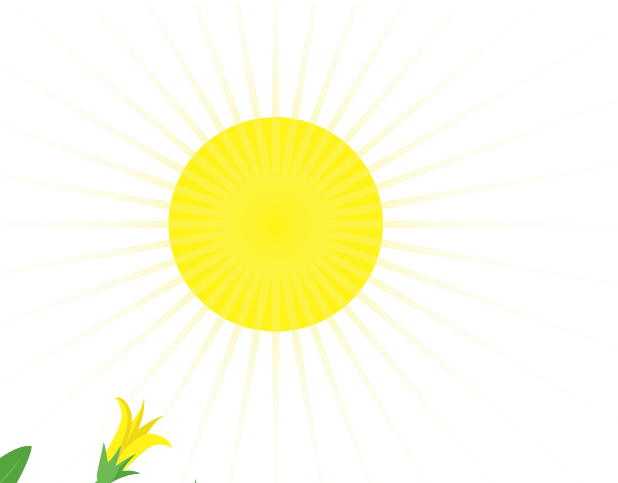
Solutions: Planting in containers or raised beds. Solarizing beds before planting. Companion planting oyster mushrooms or marigolds.



DISEASES

Several diseases of tomatoes exist in Florida that can be problematic for the large-scale producer as well as the backyard gardener. In all cases where disease is suspected, accurate identification is helpful to determine appropriate management. See our IFAS Diagnostic Services page for help. <https://diagnostics.ifas.ufl.edu/>

Tomato Disease Management Subtopics: https://edis.ifas.ufl.edu/entity/topic/tomato_diseases



Blight

Problem: Symptoms are visible on the leaf, small brownish spots that coalesce into large spots with more significant infections also producing lesions on the stems.

Solutions: Management for blight is to ensure adequate spacing, air flow and appropriate irrigation. Select disease free transplants or start from seed.

Bacterial Wilt

Problem: Symptoms include leaf wilting, stem discoloration or a milky substance oozing from cuts in the stem.

Solutions: Management requires a multi-pronged approach; planting resistant cultivars, using sanitized tools, avoid over-irrigation.

For more information see this publication https://plantpath.ifas.ufl.edu/rsol/trainingmodules/bwtomato_module.html from the Plant Pathology department.

Yellow Leaf Curl Virus

Problem: Symptoms include leaf yellowing, leaf curling, stunting and flower drop.

Solutions: Management of the virus includes managing your garden for whitefly infestations (a vector of the disease) and removing any plants suspected of infection. See the instructions [here](#) on proper disposal of plants.

Blossom end-rot

Problem: Fruit rot caused by a weakening of the cells due to Calcium deficiency.

Solutions: Prevent by not over-watering, adjusting soil pH up to 7 and applying Calcium throughout the stages of plant development.

