

# Your Garden

## Top Tips For Growing Tasty Tomatoes

(NAPS)—Americans are crazy about their tomatoes! Tomatoes are the #1 vegetable grown in gardens all across the nation.

More and more, they're grown at home—for a number of reasons. Not only is homegrown produce tasty and fresh, it could save you thousands in grocery bills every year. Fortunately, it's easy to grow tomatoes, even if you haven't got a green thumb, with these simple tips:

### Plant

1) Sow seeds indoors, into individual containers,  $\frac{1}{4}$ " deep and one to two seeds per cell. Keep moist and under good-quality light. Seedlings emerge in seven to ten days at 70° to 75° F. When seedlings have at least two pairs of leaves, acclimatize in a sheltered place outside for a week.

2) Pre-grown plants are a great alternative to homegrown seedlings. Grown and nurtured by trained horticulturists, plants should be available at the optimum time for planting into the garden.

3) To reduce disease, set plants  $1\frac{1}{2}$  to  $2\frac{1}{2}$ ' apart if a bush or compact variety, 3' to 4' if a full-vining garden type, in a sunny area with average soil. Tomatoes are vines and can be planted deep, up to the two topmost sets of leaves.

4) Water thoroughly but not too often, early in the day so that plants will dry off before evening; 1" to 2" per week is best during the growing season.

5) Mulch to retain moisture and suppress weeds. Use newspaper, grass clippings, salt hay, or straw to a depth of 3" to 4".

6) Use slow-release fertilizer at planting time to nourish young tomato plants and again when first fruits form.



**Homegrown tomatoes like this giant SteakHouse can be both tasty and budget friendly.**

### Protect

7) All tomatoes benefit from staking and caging. Emerging fruits gain improved air circulation and reduced ground pest problems.

8) Scout plants for harmful insects and disease often. Remove insects simply by picking them off or use natural soaps and beneficial insects.

### Pick

9) Pick tomatoes when fully colored and soft to the touch. Pick regularly to keep plants productive. Almost-ripe tomatoes can be ripened in brown bags or spread on newspapers at room temperature.

10) Exciting new varieties, such as Burpee's 'SteakHouse' tomato, can be enjoyed with any meal and to flavor cooked dishes, soups, sauces, stews, ketchup, paste, juice, quiche and pies. You may care to try them in curries, casseroles and chutney, too.

### Learn More

For more information, gardening ideas, videos and non-GMO seeds and plants, visit [www.burpee.com](http://www.burpee.com) or call (800) 888-1447.