

Lesson on Tomatoes

When deciding what type of a tomato to plant, consider what the use of the tomato will be: slicing, paste (for canning), or snack. Stand up sign includes this information and pictures:

Slicing – Big Boy, Brandywine, Cherokee Purple

Paste – Amish Paste, Roma, San Marzano

Snack – Cherry, Grape, Pear (Yellow)

An important thing to know is the difference between determinate and indeterminate tomato plants.

Source: <https://bonnieplants.com/blogs/garden-fundamentals/learn-tomato-growing-terms>

Determinate varieties (including bush varieties) reach a certain plant height and then stop growing. The majority of their fruit matures within a month or two and appears at the ends of the branches. These are popular with gardeners who like to can, make sauce, or have another reason for wanting most of their tomatoes at once. It might even be that you'd prefer to harvest early and leave late summer for a long vacation.

Most determinate varieties need a cage, but there are some very stocky varieties, such as Better Bush, that have a very sturdy main stems; they don't need much support, just a stake to keep them from toppling in wind and rain. Varieties especially suited to growing in pots, such as Patio and Better Bush, are determinate. Little or no pruning is needed.

Indeterminate varieties continue to grow and produce tomatoes all along the stems throughout the growing season. Indeterminate plants need extra-tall supports of at least 5 feet. Because indeterminate varieties throw out so many shoots, gardeners often prune them for optimum-sized fruit or train them on a very tall trellis. However, if you don't prune, no harm done! You may have seen photos of 10- or 15-foot tomato vines. These are definitely indeterminate types.

Other tomato terms

- **Heirloom tomato** – Any tomato that is at least fifty years old and is not a hybrid.
- **Hybrid tomato** – A tomato bred by crossing varieties. Hybrids offer better disease resistance, higher yield, and other improved traits. Our hybrids are not genetically engineered.
- **Early variety** – A tomato that matures in 50 to 60 days; these are prized for early harvests and late summer planting for a fall crop. Sometimes we refer to tomatoes that mature in more than 60 days as "early," but only in comparison to their peers. For example, the earliest beefsteak type is only early compared to other beefsteaks. Beefsteaks are typically longer maturing than other tomato types because they are so big!

Common problem with Tomatoes

Blossom End Rot in Tomatoes: Causes and Prevention ANR-1059 (See attached). This is a quick video from Tyler Mason, Regional Extension Agent at the Birmingham Botanical Garden explaining blossom end rot.

<https://youtu.be/QhHOKIZWH1o>

How to combat – provide consistent watering, mulch around the base of the plant, avoid excessive fertilizing. Soil test prior to planting to see if calcium is low and the pH is also low, then add limestone.