

Top 10 Tomato Growing tips

*This free tip sheet was produced by the Cheapskates Club –
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1. Add some compost and crushed eggshells to the hole before you transplant. The eggshells will give added calcium for the plants to feed on. Adding eggshells is an old remedy to prevent blossom end rot, which is caused by a lack of calcium.

2. Plant deep. Bury the stem of the tomato deep into the ground when you transplant the seedlings. The stem and leaves that are buried will sprout roots, giving a stronger plant.

3. Water from the ground up. It's best to avoid getting the leaves of the tomato plant wet if you can to prevent mildew. Soaker hoses spread between the plants work well, or recycle empty soft drink bottles into drip feeders.

4. Don't be a wally with the water. This is a hard one to remember, especially during a long Aussie summer. Tomatoes like an evenly moist soil and the mulch you apply and a twice weekly long, slow watering will help with this. The soil is moist enough if you can poke your index finger down to the second knuckle and a little damp soil sticks to it as you pull it out.

5. Mulch. Place a layer of straw around the plants (not just tomatoes!) in your garden. It keeps moisture in the soil and keeps weeds down. A layer about 15cm deep is just right.

6. Support. Tomatoes like to grow tall so they need something to lean on. Simple stakes will do the job, one per plant. Use strips of fabric or old pantyhose to tie them to the stakes so the stems aren't damaged. And keep on tying as the plants grow.

7. Make sure they get enough sun. Tomatoes need at least six hours of full sun a day to thrive so make sure you plant them in a nice open spot, well away from any shade.



8. Fight fungus. The bane of tomato growers the world over, fungus can be treated easily with a safe, simple homemade solution that costs just 20 cents to make. Just combine 9 cups of water with 1 cup of milk and spray this mixture liberally on the plant.

9. Pinch out the suckers. Suckers are the little "stems" that grow in the Y between a branch and the stem. They don't contribute to your plant so pinching them out (or cutting with scissors) puts the energy back into the plant. You can also pinch lower branches and leaves off to encourage a tall, strong plant.

10. Keep the birds away! There is nothing more disappointing than to reach for a big, juicy tomato, only to discover that its backside has been gored by a beak. I use a simple netting system to keep the birds off the tomatoes.

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and energy and still have fun!
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