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BAILEYS

Baileys guide to TOP QUALITY TOMATOES



PLANTING



FEEDING



HARVEST

A handy guide to successfully growing
your own Tomatoes in Western Australia
with Neville Passmore

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The most popular home garden vegetable in Australia is the tomato. It can produce large crops of fruit over many months. These fruits, which we regard as a vegetable, have wonderfully varied flavours and an ever widening range of health benefits for the consumer. From a home gardeners perspective there are two main groups of varieties; the hybrids and the heirlooms. Hybrids result from the work of breeders where specific characteristics are sought. These don't always relate to flavour, as the main target is commercial growers where shelf life and crush resistance can be of higher value.

Planting

In Perth it's possible to plant every month, however growth in winter is very slow unless you can find a 'hot spot'; a position in the garden which gets winter sun and possibly a bit of radiated heat from walls or concrete paving. Spring is the prime season for starting both seeds and seedlings as the plants respond to warmth. If you can keep tomato plants well watered in summer you will be astounded with the growth. Autumn is a good time to get plants established for winter crops.

Preparation

Perth's sandy soils have the virtue of being free draining but the liability of having little, life sustaining, soil carbon. Add a composted soil builder such as **Baileys Soil Improver Plus** to existing garden soil and mix in. Start feeding a week or two later when you see signs of growth. If growing in pots then go for a high quality mix such as **Baileys Premium Potting Mix**.



Watering and Feeding

Tomatoes are gross feeders and fast growers. Feeding and the supply of water need to be matched with the stage of development and weather conditions. This means that small plants are best fed with a liquid fertiliser- such as **Baileys Vitaplant**. Start fertilising with **Baileys Energy Garden** as soon as flower buds begin to appear. Feed every month from here on. All tall varieties need support in the form of stakes or mesh.

Aim to keep the soil or potting mix evenly moist. This can be a challenge in the middle of summer particularly if you have a large plant in a pot. Three things that can help during summer include: A cover of light shade cloth, a layer of soft mulch such as **Baileys Soil Improver Plus** and an automatic reticulation system.

Harvesting

Tomatoes are very accommodating when it comes to picking the fruit as they will continue to ripen off the vine as long as they are kept at room temperature (so don't place in the fridge if you want to keep them colouring up). Peak flavour comes from fruit you harvest at full ripeness straight from the vine. This is where home gardeners have a huge advantage over commercial producers who have to harvest at a less mature state, in order to transport the fruits to market and for it to "keep" on the shelves.



Pests and diseases

Tomatoes are also pretty popular with insect pests and diseases. Take an affected leaf, fruit or photo to your local Garden Centre for help. Control does not have to involve chemical insecticides and fungicides as there are many low impact products and remedies available.