How to Grow Tomatoes from Seed (Step by Step)

Home and Garden · about 20 minutes · 2026-11-11

A fully illustrated 29-step guide to growing tomatoes from seed: start seedlings indoors, harden them off and plant out, water and feed consistently, then harvest and save seed.

Phase 1 — Sow and Raise Seedlings Indoors

1. **Choose a variety suited to your space**
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2. **Sow six to eight weeks before last frost**
   Sow six to eight weeks before last frost.
3. **Fill trays with sterile seed compost**
   Fill trays with sterile seed compost.
4. **Sow each seed a quarter-inch deep**
   Sow each seed a quarter-inch deep.
5. **Keep the compost at 21–27 °C**
   Keep the compost at 21–27 °C.
6. **Provide 14 to 16 hours of light a day**
   Provide 14 to 16 hours of light a day.
7. **Thin to the strongest seedling**
   Thin to the strongest seedling.
8. **Water from the bottom**
   Water from the bottom.

Phase 2 — Harden Off and Plant Out

9. **Harden off over seven to ten days**
   Harden off over seven to ten days.
10. **Ease up on water and feed before moving**
    Ease up on water and feed before moving.
11. **Wait for nights above 10 °C**
    Wait for nights above 10 °C.
12. **Choose a spot with six to eight hours of sun**
    Choose a spot with six to eight hours of sun.
13. **Bury the lower stem when planting**
    Bury the lower stem when planting.
14. **Space plants 45 to 60 cm apart**
    Space plants 45 to 60 cm apart.
15. **Drive in a stake or cage at planting**
    Drive in a stake or cage at planting.

Phase 3 — Water, Feed and Train

16. Water deeply at the base

Water deeply at the base.

17. Mulch to hold moisture steady

Mulch to hold moisture steady.

18. Feed with a tomato fertiliser

Feed with a tomato fertiliser.

19. Tie the main stem to the stake

Tie the main stem to the stake.

20. Pinch out side shoots on tall varieties

Pinch out side shoots on tall varieties.

21. Remove lower leaves touching the soil

Remove lower leaves touching the soil.

22. Tap flowers to help pollination

Tap flowers to help pollination.

Phase 4 — Harvest, Troubleshoot and Save Seed

23. Pick when fully coloured but firm

Pick when fully coloured but firm.

24. Harvest regularly to keep plants producing

Harvest regularly to keep plants producing.

25. Ripen green fruit before the frost

Ripen green fruit before the frost.

26. Inspect leaves weekly for disease and pests

Inspect leaves weekly for disease and pests.

27. Rotate where you plant next year

Rotate where you plant next year.

28. Save seed from a healthy open-pollinated fruit

Save seed from a healthy open-pollinated fruit.

29. Store the dried seeds cool and dark

Store the dried seeds cool and dark.

Sources

1. Royal Horticultural Society — gardening advice
   https://www.rhs.org.uk/
2. NOAA — weather and climate
   https://www.noaa.gov/
3. USA.gov — official U.S. government services
   https://www.usa.gov/
4. NASA — official site
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Written as a checklist from https://www.howcompass.com/how-to/How-to-Grow-Tomatoes. Corrections: https://www.howcompass.com/correctio