



Growing Tomatoes in Pots

ONE METHOD FOR SHORT GROWING SEASONS

Using this method you may be able to extend your growing season and harvest ripe tomatoes on healthy plants that are virtually free of blossom end rot

Materials Needed

- 5-gallon bucket
- Hammer and nail or drill
- Sterile soilless media
- Short-season variety of tomato plant
 - This refers to how many days on average until the variety ripens fruit (Look for <75 days)
- Water soluble fertilizer 5-10-5, 8-8-8, 10-10-10, etc. (I use organic)
- Liquid calcium and magnesium or CalMag (I use organic)
 - Can be found in hydroponics growing section of your local garden center or wherever hydroponics supplies are sold
- Some type of staking materials
 - Hog-fence wire or other strong wire connected to fit around bucket or tall stakes and twine, perennial hoops, etc. Tomato cages are usually not tall enough - Need to be able to stake at least 4' high

Steps

1. Clean and disinfect 5-gallon bucket(s)
2. Make 3-5 holes in bottom of bucket for drainage
3. Fill 1/4 full with sterile soilless media
4. Place 1 tomato plant per bucket in center
5. Remove leaves from main stem that will be below the final 'soil' level (roots will form on the buried stem and will support plant as it grows)
6. After planting, the final 'soil' level should be about 2" below rim of bucket after watering-in to allow for easy watering without overflow
7. Locate bucket in a warm sunny location
 - a. A very sunny room (direct sun)
 - b. Full sun outside in a warm protected location, next to a wall or other structure that holds or reflects heat
8. Stake plant as soon as it starts to grow with whatever support you choose
 - a. Make sure it is secure so will hold up when moving the whole thing in and out at the beginning and especially the end of the season

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9. To fertilize, mix according to directions, with water in a 1-gallon milk jug and use to water thoroughly (It will take about ½ gallon per plant each time)
 - Begin with half rate of Nitrogen fertilizer for first few waterings. Too much Nitrogen will result in mealy, flavorless tomatoes
 - When flowers form, switch to ½ rate Calcium/Magnesium every other watering until fruit starts coloring and then reduce by half again. This should prevent blossom-end rot.
10. You can bring in at night when night temperatures are consistently below 50° F



Other Helpful Hints

- Prune out side shoots that form in the leaf axils to direct nutrients to main plant and so fruit get sunlight
- Tomatoes are generally self-pollinating but you can jiggle the plants to increase pollination.
- If you are growing tomatoes this way as part of a Master Gardener Experiment, record dates when planted, first and last ripe fruit and number and size of fruits

Created by Yvette Henson, Extension Director and Agriculture, Natural Resources and Horticulture Agent for San Miguel Basin.

For other Fact Sheets or information on growing 'High and Dry' (at high altitude with water limitations) come by our office at 1120 Summit Street (across from the Fair Grounds) in Norwood, call 327-4393, email Yvette.Henson@colostate.edu or maryw@sanmiguelcountyco.gov or visit our website at <http://sanmiguel.colostate.edu/>.

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