



# MARY'S TOP 10 TOMATO ANSWERS

**10. Why do some people call tomatoes fruits?** Because botanically speaking they are fruits but by law they are categorized a vegetable (something to do with taxes). Call them whatever you like.

**9. What types of tomatoes are there?**

- Early vs. Late (some fruit in July some in September)
- Paste vs. Slicers (cooking or raw)
- Determinate vs. Indeterminate (read on)
- Hybrid vs. Heirloom (a matter of taste really)
- Cherry vs. Beefsteak (little versus big)

**8. What's Determinate versus Indeterminate mean?**

- Determinate fruits (notice that I just called them a fruit although they are in the vegetable section of the farm) tend to ripen all at once, tend to be smaller plants and flower clusters have only two leaves between them. They don't always need staking.
- Indeterminate tomatoes have three to four leaves produced between flower clusters, need staking or caging and will fruit over a longer period.
- Special hint: You can get indeterminate type tomatoes to set fruit earlier by pinching off the tips of the main stems in early summer.

**7. What the heck is an heirloom tomato? I don't want some old seeds you guys have had around for years? And what's wrong with a hybrid? I thought hybrids were good?**

- Hybrid varieties are plants that have been cross bred to take the good qualities out of one variety and cross it with good varieties of another. Sort of like children. . .in theory. Unfortunately what some people consider the good qualities you get are usually as a result of giving up some other better quality, like taste.
- Heirloom varieties come from seeds that have been passed down for several generations through a family (of plants, not people although in some cases of exceptionally cheap people). We believe they are more interesting, weird, hard to grow, have lower yields, but oh the flavor and the fun of growing something that is a tomato that maybe doesn't even look like a tomato in fact that can be down right ugly.

**6. Where should I plant my tomatoes?**

Full Sun • Open to good air movement • Loam to Sandy Loam well drained fertile soil • Soil pH 5.8-7.5

**5. How much room does it take to grow a tomato?**

- 24 to 36 inches in the row OPTIMALLY (and we know we are in the city and space is a luxury)
- 36 to 48 inches between the rows. Minimally 2 feet all around

**4. How deep should I plant my tomatoes?** Bury Them! Bury tomato plants deeper than they come in the pot, all the way up to a few top leaves. Tomatoes are able to develop roots all along their stems. You can either dig a deeper hole or simply dig a shallow tunnel and lay the plant sideways. It will straighten up and grow toward the sun. Be careful not to drive your pole or cage into the stem when staking.

**3. Why Mulch?** Allows soil to Retain Moisture • Reduces blossom end rot • Cleaner fruit • Reduces rain splash • Promotes early, larger fruits • Easier to harvest • May help reduce fungal problems

**2. To Stake or not to stake?** Stake all indeterminate varieties as they get rangy. Use cages, stakes, pantyhose, wooden teepees, or whatever you think works, but keep those leaves up of the ground and keep air moving through the plant!

**1. Why the heck would I put cracked egg shells into my soil or under my tomato plants?** Egg shells contain calcium which breaks down slowly and helps reduce calcium deficiency that results in blossom end rot. A small round brown spot on the very bottom of your tomato that grows into the outright ruination of all your hard work.

