



CHERRY TOMATOES... *for flavour*

Cherry tomatoes are naturally small – so called as they are about the size of a cherry. And the smaller the tomato the better the flavour. The following details relate to growing tomatoes under glass or plastic in border soil. By choice of variety, use of high potash (K) feeds and limiting the amount of water applied, tomatoes high in sugars and acids are produced - and hence flavoursome.

VARIETIES	Many to choose from: Cherrola F1, Sakura F1, Sungold F1, Favorita F1, Rosada F1, Sweet Aperitif F1, Apero F1, Gardener's Delight.
PROPAGATION	For small numbers of plants direct sow a single seed in an 8 cm pot in February or March. For larger numbers sow into seed trays and prick out into pots at the fully expanded cotyledon stage. It takes about 8 weeks from sowing to planting.
PROP. TEMP.	Very minimum: 12°C Desirable: 18-20°C
SOIL	Add organic matter to improve the structure and water holding capacity of the soil. Spent mushroom compost is a good choice as it's high in potash. Tomatoes are reasonably tolerant of high EC in the soil. They are very susceptible to hormone weed killer residues which can be in farm yard manure.
FERTILISER	Use a high potash fertiliser e.g. 7-6-17. Amount to be applied will depend on soil analysis. Reduce or eliminate amount if organic matter is added.
PLANTING	Plant out under glass in April and under polythene in May when the soil temperature at 10 cm reaches 12-14°C. Late frosts play havoc with tomatoes specially those grown in unheated polythene tunnels and the temptation to plant out too early should be resisted. If frost threatens, cover with newspaper or fleece or provide heat. Plant the root ball about 5cm below the soil surface as tomatoes have the ability to root from buried stem surfaces.
SPACING	3.7-4 plants per sq m of cropping area. Allowing 90cm for the paths, space the plants in double rows 45cm apart and 40cm between the plants within the row. If planting on the square, use 45x45 cm or 50x50 cm.
TYING UP	Tomatoes need to be supported. Tie them to a bamboo cane or by placing a string under the base of the plant connected to the top wire, and twisting the plant around the string as it grows.
WATERING & FEEDING	Bring the soil to field capacity (flood the soil) 1-2 weeks before planting. At planting water in with 0.5 L/plant. Keep on the dry side for 2/3 weeks and then return the soil to field capacity. Water 2-3 times per week using about 1 L/plant/day once the plants have reached 1m high. It can vary from 0.5-1.5 L/plant/day depending on the weather. Use a high potash feed (2/3:1 K:N) 1-2 times per week once the first fruit have set.
SIDE SHOOTING	Tomatoes are naturally multi-stemmed, but we grow them as a single cordon for ease of maintenance. So you will need to remove the side shoots which emerge from the leaf axils on the main stem when they are 2-3 cm in length.
POLLINATION	Tomatoes are self-pollinating but for efficient pollen transfer it helps if the flowers are moved. To encourage fruit set, damp down the paths and shake the plants regularly. On a larger scale bumble bees can be effectively used. Daytime temperatures should be a minimum of 18°C and not exceed 30°C for maximum pollination.
VENTILATION	Ideal day/night temperatures are 20/16°C. For the first 3-4 weeks after planting ventilate only in sunny conditions to encourage growth and increase soil temperatures. Thereafter ventilate continuously except during very windy conditions. Inadequate ventilation can cause temperatures to rise too high leading to problems like sun scald, blotchy ripening and poor fruit set.

WHITEFLY/ GREENFLY	Planting hover fly attractant plants such as French Marigolds may be useful. Put out yellow sticky traps at planting for whitefly control. Could also use SB Plant Invigorator to help keep numbers low. The spray has to hit the insect to be effective; so spray the top of the leaves, shake the plant, some of the disturbed whitefly will be attracted to the traps, whilst others will land on the sprayed leaf surface. Then respray the upper leaf surfaces.	
TOMATO MOTH	If half eaten fruit are found check for Tomato Moth caterpillars. These have a very distinctive yellow line down both sides of the body. Go out in the evening and pick them off.	
GREY MOULD	Caused by Botrytis and can attack both stems and fruit (ghost spotting). To minimise ensure adequate ventilation.	
MAGNESIUM DEFICIENCY	Magnesium deficiency appears as an interveinal yellowing of the lower leaves, starting at the margin. It occurs most frequently when the plants are under stress from a heavy fruit load and can also be induced by high potassium levels in the substrate. More likely to occur if using growbags. Rarely affects yield unless chronic. Use repeated foliar sprays of magnesium sulphate (Epsom salts) at a strength of 20g per litre of water as soon as first symptoms are seen.	
CALCIUM DEFICIENCY	Causes blossom end rot where the bottom of the developing fruit turns brown. Like magnesium it's an induced deficiency brought on by irregular watering. Calcium is not a very mobile element within the plant and to prevent this disorder ensure that watering is carried out regularly. Cherry tomatoes are not prone to blossom end rot.	
LEAF ROLL	Commonly found in unheated houses, rolling of the older leaves is caused by excessive day/night temperature fluctuations and is usually first noticed on plants growing nearest the door. Although unsightly it doesn't affect tomato yield.	
FRUIT SPLITTING	This disorder causes a crack to appear on the fruit and is typically seen in late summer/autumn. It's caused by temperature variations at that time of year – warm days followed by cool nights – and is associated with variation in water pressure within the plant. Typical of cold house production. The variety Sakura is less prone to splitting.	
SOIL SICKNESS	Tomatoes cannot be grown continuously in the same ground due to a build-up of soil-borne diseases that leads to root rots. Hence the soil must be changed after 2-3 seasons. Or using of a mixture of FYM + garden compost and growing only every second year may steer you clear of trouble. Another option would be to use growbags.	
HARVESTING	July – October. When the plants reach the roof or when 7-8 trusses have set, remove the top of the plant 2 leaves above the last truss. Tomatoes will yield about 3 kg per plant.	
RECOMMENDED LEVELS IN SOIL	PH: 6.5 P: 30 ppm K: 500 – 800 ppm	Mg: 350-700 ppm Nitrate N: 50-100 ppm EC: 80-150 mS/m



Blossom end rot



Mg deficiency symptoms



Leaf roll