

TOMATO TALK

Sponsored by the Rochester
Public Library Seed Library

June 16, 2021





AGENDA FOR JUNE:

- Pruning
- Mulching
- Watering
- Fertilizing
- Tickling

PRUNING: THE STEM

- Early Blight is a common fungal disease in tomatoes
- The fungal spores are thought to reach the leaves of the tomato from soil splashing during rain events or watering
- Removal of the lowest leaves can greatly delay Early Blight
- Pruning lower leaves also increases air flow through the plant and allows for planting other crops beneath.



PRUNING: FLOWERS

- Sometimes two or more blossoms will fuse together creating a megabloom, also called fasciation. This is more common in heirloom tomatoes, especially larger varieties, like beefsteaks.
- This will result in fruit that is fine to eat, but strangely shaped and unattractive.
- Snip these blossoms off to avoid “catfaced” tomatoes
- The tomatoes on the right show mild and severe fasciation.



PRUNING: SUCKERS

“Sucker” : New growth that forms in the space between the stem and a leaf.

Suckers DON'T need to be pruned from determinate tomatoes.

Pruning some of the suckers on indeterminate tomatoes will

- Increase airflow and reduce disease
- Prevent unruly sprawl and trellis toppling
- Encourage more and earlier tomatoes





MULCHING

Mulching is beneficial for any crop and any garden. It suppresses weeds, keeps the soil cooler, retains moisture and provides many benefits for soil microorganisms.

BUT, for tomatoes it's EXTRA important to reduce soil splashing.

Mulching options: grass clippings (weed-free), leaves, wood chips, pine needles, straw, black or red plastic

WATERING

- Tomatoes grow best with consistent watering; too dry and the fruit will be stunted, too much water and you may get cracking.
- Consistent watering may reduce Blossom End Rot (BER)
- Avoid splashing leaves by watering at the base of the plant rather than from up above.

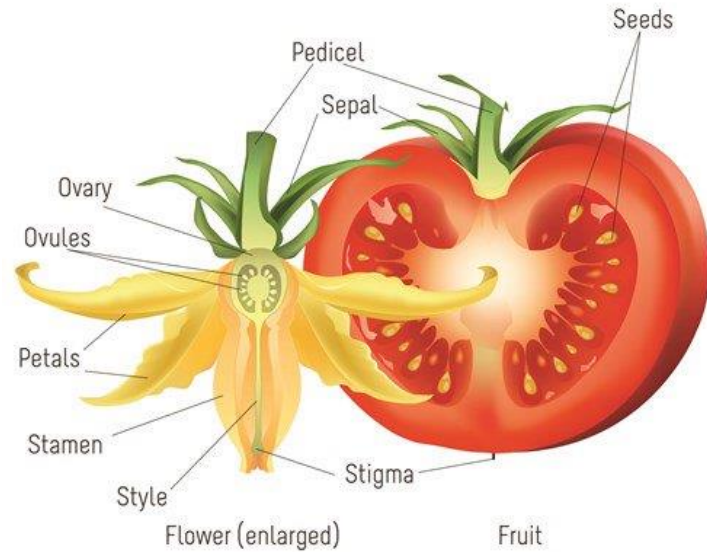


FERTILIZING

- Fertilize when you originally plant the tomato
- Fertilize again when the plant starts to set fruit
- Fertilize every 3-4 weeks through the harvest.
- Organic Tomato-tone fertilizer is a good option available locally. Contains calcium to help prevent blossom end rot (BER)



TICKLING!



- Tomato flowers contain both the male and female flower parts. They are self-pollinating.
 - Inside the flower, the pollen from the stamen needs to fall onto the stigma.
 - Vibrations from insects landing and buzzing wings encourages pollination
- Gardeners can increase fruit set by “tickling” flower clusters to accomplish the same thing.

QUESTIONS OR COMMENTS?