

GROWING TOMATOES WITH LESS WATER



Nothing is as good as a home-grown tomato. There are many tomato varieties that grow well in our area and most of them need about 2-3 gallons of water per week to yield flavorful tomatoes. Water conservation is an important part of our community, it is something that should be taken into consideration when growing your own tomatoes. There are several ways to use less water and still make sure your tomatoes are happy.

When picking out your starters or seeds take a look at days to maturity. The earlier the tomato, the less water it will require before it yields fruit. Most tomato varieties have a 45 to 60-day period before fruit appears. Another option to save water is to grow determinate tomatoes. Their growing season is much shorter than most tomato varieties. Determinate tomato varieties are often referred to as “bush” tomatoes because they do not continue growing in length throughout the growing season. They are generally smaller plants, usually growing only 4-5 feet tall. The fruit ripens in about two weeks and after that happens the plant will begin to diminish in vigor and will set little to no new fruit.

Another option to consider is dry farming. Dry farming tomatoes is a very simple process where you plant and water your tomatoes just as you normally would until the plant begins setting fruit. Once the fruit appears on the tomato plant, you stop watering. Varieties that do well as dry-farmed crops typically have an aggressive root system capable of reaching deep into the soil horizon to tap the stored moisture. “Early Girl” is a good choice for dry farming as it has the ability to set deep roots and consistently produce a good yield of high quality, flavorful fruits with no irrigation. “New Girl”, is closely related to ‘Early Girl’ and appears to have many of the same favorable characteristics but produces lower yields.

Growing your own tomatoes is a rewarding and delicious hobby. If you practice water conservation and want to grow with less water give it a try! Check with local nurseries, fellow gardeners, and friends to get the lowdown on producing quality tomatoes with less water.