

# 2021 VEGGIE GARDEN PROJECT

## Parent's Corner - July 2021 - Letter No. 3

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### HARVESTING YOUR TOMATOES

Tomatoes are the most common garden plant. What a reward it is to finally pick that first ripe tomato from the vine of your plants you have been nurturing. There is a certain satisfaction that comes with home grown produce and it is incomparable to supermarket stock.

Tomatoes ripen from the inside out, so when the outer skin is firm and full colored, you know you have a ripe tomato that is ready for you to pick. The color will be red, unless the variety of your tomato happens to be yellow. Tomatoes grow and develop best between 65 to 85 degrees Fahrenheit.

When the temperature exceeds 85 degrees Fahrenheit, the growing process and color development slow down. It is best to pick tomatoes when they are pink during the heat of the summer. This is done to avoid having the tomatoes ripen on the vine and turn a shade of yellowish-orange. The tomatoes can then finish ripening indoors to reach the desirable color of red. Light is not necessary to complete this process. Also, we do not recommend that under ripened tomatoes be placed in window sills as the direct sun will burn the tomatoes and keep them from fully ripening. Ripening tomatoes need to be placed where direct sunlight will not affect ripening.

Tomatoes may be stored until they are needed once the ripening process is complete. Ripe tomatoes will keep one week when refrigerated at 45-50 degrees Fahrenheit.

### COMMON TOMATO PROBLEMS – PSYIOLOGICAL DISORDER

**LEAF CURL:** A curling or upward rolling of the leaves occurs in hot weather or after cultivation or severe pruning. It does not affect yield or quality. Keep plants well-watered and do not hoe deeply around plants.

**BLOSSOM END ROT:** A dry leathery patch at the bottom of the tomato fruit is often caused by fluctuations in the soil moisture supply, especially under certain environmental conditions. Provide uniform watering, use a mulch, and do not over fertilize with the ammonium form of nitrogen.

**BLOSSOM DROP:** At low temperatures (below 60 degrees Fahrenheit) or high temperature (above 90-degree Fahrenheit), blooms may fall off plants. Only spring bloom drop from low temperatures can be reduced by hormone-type "blossom-set" sprays. Avoid excessive nitrogen fertilization.

**CRACKING:** Sudden summer rains or watering after drought may cause fruit cracking. Choose a variety recommended for Kansas that shows resistance to cracking. Pick fruits in the pink stage and allow them to ripen indoors.



**WEED SPRAY DAMAGE:** Phenoxy herbicides such as 2,4-D in very small quantities may cause twisting and distortion of tomato stems and leaves. Avoid the use of these sprays close to your garden and do not allow wind to drift vapors or spray onto your plants. Plants will usually return to normal after several weeks.

## TOMATO BLOSSOM SET

It takes about 30 days for tomatoes to develop from flowers. If you are lucky, you have tomatoes setting on the vines, however, for those of you that don't, you might be waiting a bit longer to enjoy any luscious tomatoes. If tomatoes have not been setting fruit as they normally would during this time of the year, it is basically due to the hot weather and heat stress the plants are under right now.

## TIPS FOR EXHIBITING TOMATOES

1. Select for varietal type, size, color, and maturity.
2. Firm, free from cracks, disease, insect, and mechanical injury.
3. Remove stem when exhibiting.
4. Do not get overripe or soft specimens.
5. Exhibit with stem end down.

## TIPS FOR EXHIBITING WATERMELLON

1. Typical of the variety in shape and color.
2. Symmetrical.
3. Free from gourd necks or bottle necks.
4. Not overripe, sunburned, or damaged by insects or disease.
5. Avoid flat-bottomed melons.

## TIPS FOR EXHIBITING SUNFLOWERS

1. Display head of sunflower only with seeds intact.
2. Dark green in color

## TIPS FOR EXHIBITING PEPPERS

1. Deep in Color
2. Fresh, firm, symmetrical.
3. Traces of red color not desirable unless peppers are uniformly red in color.
4. Number of lobes should be uniform
5. Trim stem  $\frac{1}{4}$  to  $\frac{1}{2}$  inch (but not so long that the peppers cannot stand up on the stem end).
6. Exhibit with the stem end down.

