

## Planting Tomatoes

**Before planting**, start “hardening off” your young plants by setting them outdoors in a lightly shaded area for an hour or two. The next day, give them a longer visit outside until they remain outdoors overnight, still in their pots. Naturally, if a cold spell hits, bring them indoors again to wait for the temperature to rise

**When planting**, bury the stem almost up to the lowest set of leaves, even if this means covering up several extra inches of the plant. If your plants have a long, tall spindly stem with leaves widely spaced, you can either dig a deeper hole or simply dig a shallow tunnel and lay the plant sideways in the ground right up to the first set of leaves—the plant will root all along its stem. Lay the plant carefully into the hole as if you are burying it, and then gently angle the stem upwards, so that the only part showing is the very top, with at least **4 to 6 leaves above ground**.

**Mulch** after the ground has warmed up. Mulching does conserve water and prevents the soil and soil born diseases from splashing up on the plants, but if you put it down too early it will also shade and therefore cool the soil.

**Pruning:** Indeterminate tomatoes produce suckers (young shoots that appear at the Y between branches and the main stem) that grow into sprawling plants if they are not pruned. Pinch and remove suckers that develop in the crotch joint of two branches. They won't bear fruit and will take energy away from the rest of the plant. To maintain size and shape, indeterminate tomatoes require pruning. Determinate varieties require no pruning at all or only occasional pruning to maintain overall shape or to remove dead foliage.

The amount of space you need to keep between tomato plants depends on the type you're growing.

Determinate & compact indeterminate – 2' apart  
Indeterminate grown in cages – 3 feet apart

Indeterminate grown on stakes – 18" apart  
Container varieties – 2 gallon pot

Once the fruit sets, be sure to keep the plants evenly watered until they are nearly ripe. **The rule of thumb is an inch and a half a week**, but if you begin the season watering more heavily, keep up the same rate. Just before the fruit ripens, taper off a bit. This will make the flavor meatier and less watery.

---

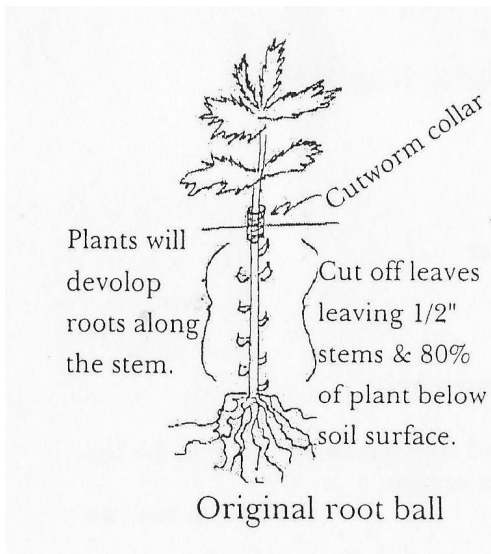
### Richard's (Tomato) Rapid Start

¼ cup dried coffee grounds  
1 cup sugar  
¼ cup tomato fertilizer

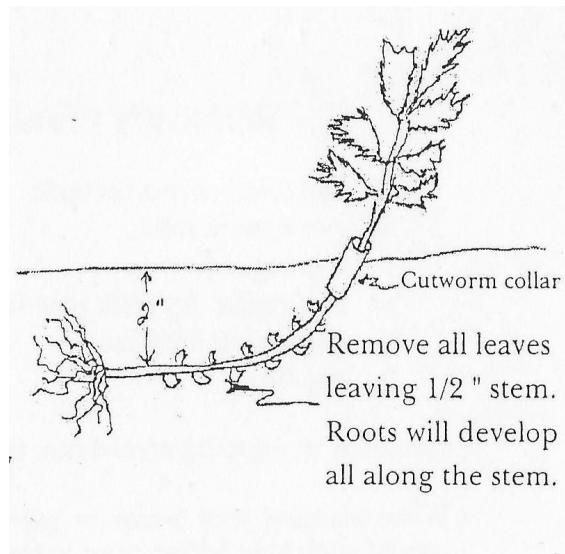
¼ cup Epsom Salts  
¼ cup nonfat dry milk powder  
1 cup lime

Combine all ingredients and mix thoroughly. When planting your tomatoes, place approximately ¼ cup in the bottom of each hole before placing the tomato plant. MG Richard Teruya

---



Use this Method for plants less than 10"



Use this method for plants greater than 10" tall