



Tomatoes for the Veggie Garden

by Bev Servadio, UC Master Gardener

I'm employed as Garden Associate in a local store and this time of the year is extremely busy with questions from those seeking to grow their own fruits and vegetables.

Not too long ago a gentleman approached me and asked what my favorite tomato was. I expressed a great appreciation for tomatoes but lamented that I had reduced my selections to a couple of cherry tomatoes for salads and a Roma for cooking. He looked at me and stated, "Well, I grow tomatoes. I'll bring you a few."

I helped him with his shopping and told him to have a great day when he was leaving. "I'll be back in a couple of weeks" he said.

And he did come back – bringing with him five different varieties of tomato seedlings! All of them are indeterminate, which mean they will bloom, set fruit, and ripen continually until a hard frost/freeze kills them. An online search by variety name provided several seed sources for the tomatoes featured.

So a special thanks to my new friend for the gift from his garden. A little research on the internet indicates I'm in for a flavor treat this season.

Indigo Rose This is a truly purple tomato. It comes from a program at Oregon State University that is seeking to produce tomatoes with high levels of antioxidants. As it ripens the underside that is shielded from the sun turns red. Flavor is great, strongly acidic and when sliced it looks just like a plum with its deep red flesh. The 2 – 2.5 ounce fruit grows on vines with nice clusters of 6-8 fruit. Estimated maturity date 90 days.



Nyagous Described as a dark-colored tomato that produces globe-shaped fruit in clusters of 3-6. It is listed as being aromatic and having sweet, meaty flesh that has a rich, salty, and smoky taste. It scored points for its high productivity and being well suited for slicing and eating raw. Estimated maturity date 80-85 days.

Green Zebra I had to laugh at myself about this one. Green? How do you tell if its ripe? Then I remembered how much our family loves Fried Green Tomatoes. Not to worry, the feeling for firmness and a



slight “give” are indications of ripeness. Some websites stated the light green stripes turn yellow and I did find a picture that shows that. It has a compact growth habit which will fit perfect in my Square Foot Garden. This one is said to have a simultaneous sweet and tangy taste and has 2” sized fruit. Estimated maturity date 75 days.



Black Zebra A cross between the Green Zebra and a black tomato this beauty is purple/mahogany with green stripes. The flavor is said to be exceptionally rich, complex, delightful tomato that contains hints of smoke and sweetness. It is about 1 ½ inches in size. Estimated maturity date 85 days.

Copia Reading the info on this one immediately got my attention! It is named in honor of Copia, the American Center for Food, Wine and the Arts, in Napa California. It is a cross between Green Zebra and Marvel Stripe. Described as a beautiful tomato with fine-lined golden yellow and red stripes that continue from outside skin to inside flesh. Very juicy, flavorful, sweet, and weigh about a pound each. Estimated maturity date 85 days.



The quick approach of hot weather means it’s too late for tomato seed planting. You can find a great selection of old time favorites, heirlooms, or certified organic tomato transplants at your local garden nurseries or big box stores.

April 25, 2013