



Growing Tomatoes in Containers

Presentation Summary

SOIL FOR CONTAINERS:

- Make your own container mix by combining equal parts of good top soil mix with compost, coconut coir and vermiculite or perlite. Coir is sold in a compressed form and will expand in volume when soaked in water. Soak it before combining with the other ingredients. Many sources suggest the use of peat moss rather than coir. Peat moss is harvested from wetland peat bogs. Because it takes thousands of years to regenerate peat, environmentalists consider peat moss to be a nonrenewable resource. Coir is a byproduct of the coconut industry, and is renewable.
- If you are re-using a soil mix, you may want to add some organic fertilizer to the soil mix (*e.g.*, bone meal for potassium and blood meal for nitrogen). For tomatoes, use nitrogen sparingly.
- You can add loamy garden soil to your mix, but before you add soil, heat the soil in an oven for 1 hour at 210° F to kill any bacteria, fungi, insects, or weed seeds.

WHY ADDING 2 ASPIRINS TO THE PLANTING HOLE HELPS:

Salicylic acid, the chemical compound found naturally in most plants (as well as in the most-used medication, aspirin), is a plant hormone produced at elevated levels in response to attack by microbial pathogens. According to a report on the Internet in the *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences* (PNAS Early Edition, week of Dec. 7, 2003) by BTI's Dharendra Kumar and Daniel F. Klessig, the aspirin-like hormone is perceived by the SABP2 protein and a message is transmitted, via a lipid-based signal, to activate the plant's defense arsenal. Says Klessig, "Now that we know a key signaling protein in plant immune systems, we can work on ways to enhance the signal and help plants fight disease without using potentially harmful pesticides." (From a press release from Cornell University)

HOW TO MAKE AND USE WORM-CAST TEA:

- Start with 2-3 cups of worm castings. If you don't have a worm composter, you can purchase worm castings in many nurseries and at *Our Garden*.
- Mix worm castings with water in a five-gallon bucket. Add a tablespoon of molasses to feed the microorganisms in the worm castings (optional). Stir well. Also stir the mixture a couple of times a day.
- After 24 hours (and not more than 48 hours), dilute the mixture you have created. Add one part of the mixture to 4 parts of water. (Your 5 gallons of mixture will make about 25 gallons of diluted mixture. If you need less, start with less than 5 gallons.)
- Water your container plants (indoor and outdoor) with the mixture.
- Your container plants should be watered with this mixture every 1-2 weeks.
- Can also be used to water plants that are growing in the ground.

VARIETIES SUITABLE FOR CONTAINERS:

- Determinate varieties of all types
- Cherry tomatoes of all types
- Hybrids developed for containers (*e.g.*, Patio, Pixie, Tiny Tim, Saladette, Toy Boy, Spring Giant, Tumbling Tom, Small Fry)