

Master Gardener Favorites

Tomatoes

The '**Fourth of July**' is one of my favorites....it's small (good for snack eating, or putting in salads). For longevity on the shelf is the **Roma**....a drier tomato, good for cooking. But the small yellow cherry, **Sungold cherry**, is also one of the tastiest, just pop it into your mouth like a jelly bean, actually better than a jelly bean

Parks Whopper: tomatoes are big (up to a lb) with no special attention. Flavor is sweet with a little tang. Flesh is juicy and nice for cutting. 75 days to maturity. I don't know if it is determinate or indeterminate. The tomato is beautiful when cut open. Very nice for slicing and sandwiches. They are always healthy plants.

Sunsugar Hybrid: They are cherry tomatoes with a wonderful yellow color and a very sweet flavor. Makes a wonderful salad (cut in half with pieces of mozzarella cheese and minced chives dressed with Newman's Own Italian salad dressing or just fun to eat off the bush. I believe they are indeterminate. They will get amazingly tall and must be staked accordingly. They last all summer long until frost. They are usually healthy until the end.

Black Zebra: crimson striped w/green and gold, very round, 4 oz, medium sized fruit, smoky-sweet rich taste, heirloom, late season, 75 days, indeterminate.

Campbells 1327: round, medium sized, red, sweet fruit, disease resistant and does well in unfavorable conditions crack resistant, 69 days, determinate.

Pink Ponderosa: pink beefsteak, great for slicing and on BLTs, low acidity, very meaty, late season, 95 days, indeterminate.

Sunny Goliath: 8 oz, yellow/gold, sweet, low in acid, disease resistant: VFN, 70 days, indeterminate.

Purple Prudence was by far the most delicious tomato I've ever tasted. It is large, meaty, nice texture and very flavorful.

The only problem with this heirloom variety tomato is that it has absolutely no shelf life. You have to eat it the day it is harvested.

The '**black' cherry tomato** is a favorite. The color is beautiful, the size and the flavor are perfect. Even when they are not so ripe they are delicious. I don't enjoy so much the tomatoes that are green or yellow because I am always waiting for them to turn red or if I make a salad the people that eat it look a little uncomfortable eating green and yellow tomatoes.

Giant Belgium or Giant Pink Belgium has been a favorite of my family when I used to grow my tomatoes from seed. I would try 15 or so varieties and give the seedlings to friends and family. The Giant Pink Belgium became the one most sought after. The fruits are large and slightly pink. The flesh is somewhat firm but juicy and very sweet. It is an indeterminate variety. The plant does not produce an abundance of tomatoes, but I've found when you get a ripe one, it is best enjoyed raw in its simplest form.

You've got to be kidding!!!!!!! You want me to pick out a favorite tomato? Last year I was going to cut down on the tomatoes since we weren't having TOTH but still ended up with planting 55 varieties that I **had** to have.

Anyway, here goes.

Indeterminate cherry: **Black Cherry** is probably my favorite of all categories.

Chocolate Cherry is a new one for me last year. Just as good. I think it is open-pollinated so I saved seeds and started 15 plants this year. The proof will be in the fruit.

Sungold and Sunsugar and both gold/orange, sweet, taste-test winners. Sunsugar doesn't tend to crack as much as Sungold when it gets ripe. **Juliet** AAS, would be under the cherry class I guess. It's more like a small roma or large grape tomato.

Excellent for drying. **Green Grape and Dr. Carolyn** (white) are cherry tomatoes that are unique in salads or a display arrangement tray. Good flavor but not exceptional.

Paste & Processing type: **Jersey Devil** (red) is an heirloom plant someone gave me. The fruit is shaped like a large red chili pepper, but it is very meaty, juicy, few seeds. I cut it lengthwise into quarters to use. Everyone who tried it fell in love with it. I saved seeds and hope to have a good crop this year.

Old Ivory Egg is a white roma-type heirloom. Good flavor, thin skinned, very juicy.

New Zealand Pear heirloom is pink, meaty, good flavor, small pear shape.

Large & Salad size : **Chianti Rose** (pink), **Caspian Pink** heirloom, **Sweet Tangerine** hybrid (orange) are all large, sweet yet 'tomato' tasting, juicy, good slicers ; but the best flavors, I believe, are in the '**black**' group.

Black Brandywine, Black Prince or Black Krim or Black all heirlooms. My favorite for taste in that category is **Purple Calabash**. It isn't easy to grow to perfection. The fruit is medium size, very fluted (so it's hard to get slices, I quarter it also sometimes), very thin skin so it doesn't hold very well. Pick it when it is ready - eat it!

White Queen heirloom is my favorite white tomato, mild flavor, nice presentation, medium to large.

Lemon Boy hy. (true yellow) and **Aunt Ruby's German Green** heirloom (green) both have a tart or citrusy taste. Both have won in their categories when we had taste tests at our festivals.

All of these are indeterminate, I believe, and will produce a continuing crop. I know the plants grow indeterminately!! I'm going to try a method of pruning the tomato plants this year after they get 4 or 5 feet tall, and pruning some of the side branching to direct the growing energy to the fruit.

I didn't list any ordinary red ones, except **Jersey Devil**. The others are unique. I like unique.

I like **beefsteak** tomatoes, large indeterminate reds.

If I were to grow only one variety of tomato, it would have to be the **Early Girl**', always my first tomato of the season. The Early Girl is Indeterminate, is well suited to our climate and is even classified as a dry land tomato. Dryland Early Girl tomato's are a big seller in the Bay Area of Calif.

My second choice would have to be the '**Celebrity**', it is determinate, is disease resistant to F) Fusarium wilt, V) Verticillium wilt N) Root knot nematodes and T) Tobacco mosaic. I like it because it is also well adapted to our climate. Produce beautiful fruit, with good flavor.

My 3rd choice is the '**Big Boy**', again produces large, flavorful fruit. The Big Boy is also indeterminate. A consistent winner.

My favorite when planting is the **Ace**. If someone else grows them, I love the heirloom; but my crop of heirloom last year was worthless. I can't decide if I prefer determinate or indeterminate. We had indeterminate **4th of July**, cherry and **yellow pear cherry** plants last year and it was great having tomatoes for 4 months, but in then they became monsters.

Since I grow tomatoes where we have a problem with root knot nematodes, I usually only grow plants that are resistant. My best producers are '**Lemon Boy**' and '**Jetsetter**'. I also grow **Better Boy** and **Big Beef**. I still grow '**Juliet**' even though it's not nematode resistant. It's such a great tasting plum shaped, sweet tomato, and plant it into mostly compost.

Sun Gold is one of my favorites: it is a large indeterminate cherry tomato with a wonderfully sweet fruit. Not only are these plants prolific producers, they are disease resistant as well. They are healthy growers that last the entire season, so give them plenty of room. The fruit is nearly a fluorescent orange when ripe; don't pick too soon - the wait is worth this delicious taste of summer!

Juliet, a large grape tomato, resembles a mini plum tomato. A prolific producer, it has good red color and consistently well-balanced flavor; very sweet, juicy and meaty. It's long-lasting on the vine and was a 1999 All-America Selection winner.

Sun Gold, a large round cherry tomato, true to its name, is a bright gold color. It's a prolific producer, with consistently good, slightly more acidic flavor.

Black Brandywine, is a decidedly ugly tomato, but OH, what flavor! An heirloom-type tomato, it is large and not always well shaped, with streaks and, sometimes, cracks and large shoulders on blackish purple skin. The flavor, though a little inconsistent, is mostly wonderfully rich (just close your eyes as you eat it).

We always plant indeterminate red tomatoes like **Early Girl**, but my personal favorite is **Sun Gold**, an indeterminate yellow cherry that I eat like candy because they are so sweet.-----

The best most versatile tomato on the planet is '**Juliet**'. I use it for everything.-