



CHERRY TOMATOES... *for flavour*

Cherry tomatoes are naturally small and vary in size from a cherry to a table tennis ball. And the smaller the tomato the better the flavour. The following details relate to growing tomatoes under glass or plastic in border soil. By choice of variety, use of high potash (K) feeds and limiting the amount of water applied, tomatoes high in sugars and acids are produced - and hence flavoursome.

VARIETIES	Many to choose from e.g. Cherrola F1, Sakura F1, Sungold F1, Favorita F1, Rosada F1, Sweet Aperitif, Gardener's Delight.
PROPAGATION	For small numbers of plants direct sow a single seed in an 8 cm pot in February or March. For larger numbers sow into seed trays and prick out into pots at the fully expanded cotyledon stage. It takes about 8 weeks from sowing to planting.
PROPAGATION TEMP.	Very minimum: 12°C Desirable: 18-20°C
SOIL	Add organic matter to improve the structure and water holding capacity of the soil. Spent mushroom compost is an excellent choice.
FERTILISER	Use a high potash fertiliser e.g. 7-6-17. Amount to be applied will depend on soil analysis.
PLANTING	Plant out under glass in April and under polythene in May when the soil temperature at 10 cm reaches 12-14°C. Late frosts play havoc with tomatoes specially those grown in unheated polythene tunnels and the temptation to plant out too early should be resisted. If frost threatens, cover with newspaper or fleece or provide heat.
SPACING	3.7-4 plants per sq m of cropping area. Allowing 90cm for the paths, space the plants in double rows 45cm apart and 40cm between the plants within the row. If planting on the square, space the plants at 45x45 cm or 50x50 cm.
TYING UP	Tomatoes need to be supported, either by tying them to a bamboo cane or by tying a string around the base of the plant and twisting the plant around the string as it grows.
WATERING & FEEDING	Bring the soil to field capacity (flood the soil) one to two weeks before planting. At planting water in with 0.5 L/plant. Keep on the dry side for 2/3 weeks and then return the soil to field capacity, by applying 2 L/plant. Commence to feed with every watering using 1.5-2.5 L/plant every week. Use a high potash feed, picking a product that's as close to a 2:1 – 3:1 (K:N) ratio as you can find.
SIDE SHOOTING	Tomatoes are naturally multi-stemmed, but we grow them as a single cordon for ease of maintenance. So you will need to remove the side shoots which emerge from the leaf axils on the main stem when they are 2-3 cm in length.
POLLINATION	Tomatoes are self pollinating. To encourage fruit set, damp down the paths and shake the supports occasionally. On a larger scale bumble bees can be effectively used. Daytime temperatures should be a minimum of 15°C and not exceed 30°C for maximum pollination.
VENTILATION	Ideal day/night temperatures are 20/16°C. For the first 3-4 weeks after planting ventilate only in sunny conditions to encourage growth and increase soil temperatures. Thereafter ventilate continuously except during very windy conditions. Inadequate ventilation can cause temperatures to rise too high leading to problems like sun scald, blotchy ripening and poor fruit set.

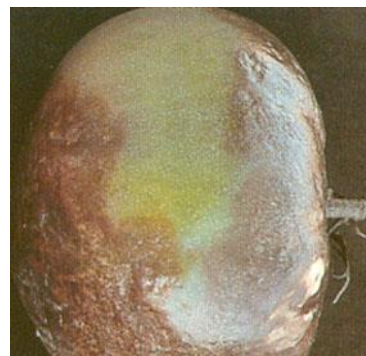
WHITEFLY/ GREENFLY	Can be a problem. Planting hover fly attractant plants such as French Marigolds can be useful in keeping fly levels down.	
TOMATO MOTH	If half eaten fruit are found check for Tomato Moth caterpillars. These have a very distinctive yellow line down both sides of the body. Spray with a pyrethrin based spray if seen or use insect netting on the doors of poly tunnels to prevent entry.	
GREY MOULD	Caused by Botrytis and can attack both stems and fruit (ghost spotting). To minimise ensure adequate ventilation.	
MAGNESIUM DEFICIENCY	Magnesium deficiency appears as an interveinal yellowing of the lower leaves, starting at the margin. It occurs most frequently when the plants are under stress from a heavy fruit load and can also be induced by high potassium levels in the substrate. More likely to occur if using grow-bags. Rarely affects yield unless chronic. Use repeated foliar sprays of magnesium sulphate (Epsom salts) at a strength of 20g per litre of water as soon as seen.	
CALCIUM DEFICIENCY	Causes blossom end rot where the bottom of the developing fruit turns brown. Like magnesium it's an induced deficiency brought on by irregular watering. Calcium is not a very mobile element within the plant and to prevent this disorder ensure that watering is carried out regularly. Cherry tomatoes are not prone to blossom end rot.	
LEAF ROLL	Commonly found in smaller houses, rolling of the older leaves is caused by air drafts and is usually first noticed on plants growing nearest the door. Although unsightly it doesn't affect tomato yield.	
FRUIT SPLITTING	This disorder causes a crack to appear on the fruit and is typically seen in late summer/autumn. It's caused by temperature variations at that time of year – warm days followed by cool nights – and is associated with variation in water pressure within the plant. Typical of cold house production. The variety Sakura is less prone to splitting.	
SOIL SICKNESS	Tomatoes cannot be grown continuously in the same ground due to a build up of soil borne diseases that leads to root rots. Hence the soil must either be changed or sterilised after 2-3 seasons. Another option would be to use grow bags.	
HARVESTING	July – October. When the plants reach the roof or when 7-8 trusses have set remove the top of the plant 2 leaves above the last truss.	
YIELD	3 kg/plant.	
RECOMMENDED NUTRIENT LEVELS IN SOIL (PPM)	PH: 6.5 P: 80 K: 600 – 800	Mg: 350-700 Nitrate N: 50-100 EC: 80-150 mS/m



Blossom end rot



Mg deficiency symptoms



Potato blight