

WILD TOMATO

Currant Tomato

Solanum pimpinellifolium

Solanaceae

ECHO® PLANT INFORMATION SHEET

Description

The wild tomato (*Solanum pimpinellifolium*) is a different species than the standard tomato (*Solanum lycopersicum*). Wild tomatoes produce many hands/bunches of tiny fruit on very large, sprawling plants that live up to their name. Wild tomato is a good option for hot, humid conditions. Most cultivated tomatoes are susceptible to diseases, especially in hot, humid weather. It is an indeterminate producer (flowers and fruits continually throughout the growing season).

Uses

The bite-sized fruit has soft skin and is easily added to salads, requiring no processing. The fruits are known for their rich flavor. Wild tomato fruits are easy to harvest, with minimal damage to the skin. Wild tomato is an excellent addition near a house or on the border of a field, as it is perfect for harvesting and eating out of hand.

Cultivation

Seed and plant the wild tomato at the same time as standard tomatoes for your area. However, you can plant them a few weeks earlier and a few weeks later than usual in subtropical and tropical climates to extend the growing season. If planting in a temperate climate, plant them during the typical tomato growing season and they should continue to bear fruit for an extra month or two after the regular growing season. It takes about 90 days to obtain the first harvest of fruit after planting seeds.

Sow seeds into nursery beds, small containers, or trays for starting seedlings. When the resulting seedlings have three to five leaves, transplant them into the garden 1 m apart within rows and 2 m between rows. This spacing might seem excessive, but it is not; they need a lot of space.

Wild tomato plants need water, especially as they are getting established, and fertile soil amended with phosphorus will increase productivity. Volunteer wild tomato plants that self-sow often do well even without any watering or fertilizing. The plants do better when watered and fertilized but they can also grow without much attention and input.

If you want to make the fruit more accessible and minimize disease problems, support the plants with a trellis. Keeping the canopy above the ground helps keep the leaves dry, preventing diseases that spread rapidly under wet conditions. Wild tomato has many side branches but trellising in a weave pattern helps keep the main plant supported so that fruit is visible. Weave trellising involves passing strings on either side of the plant as it grows, containing the plant between the strings of the trellising. Weaving usually starts when plants are 75-90 cm tall and additional strings are added as the plants grow upward. Stakes in-row with plants anchor the string. The plants will engulf tomato cages, making them unsuitable as supports. You can also let plants go unmanaged, but they will need more space to crawl and sprawl since they will not be encouraged to grow upwards.

Harvesting and Seed Production

It is an open-pollinated heirloom, and you can save the seed from year to year. Although the wild tomato (*Solanum pimpinellifolium*) is a different species than the standard tomato (*Solanum lycopersicum*), the two species are cross-compatible, meaning they can cross-pollinate and produce viable offspring. If you have both species, you must isolate them with exclusion netting to save seed.

Pests and Diseases

The wild tomato is naturally disease and heat-resistant, so it performs well even when standard tomatoes would struggle.

References

McCormack, J.H. 2004. [Tomato seed production](http://www.savingourseeds.org): an organic seed production manual for seed growers in the Mid-Atlantic and Southern U.S. www.savingourseeds.org. Version 2.6 [NOTE: The manual summarizes factors affecting the distance over which cross-pollination of tomatoes can occur. A companion manual entitled 'Isolation Distances', also found at www.savingourseeds.org, provides more in-depth information on keeping seed varieties pure.]