

# Growing the Perfect Jersey Tomatoes

Bill Hlubik at [hlubik@njaes.rutgers.edu](mailto:hlubik@njaes.rutgers.edu)

Agricultural Agent-Professor Rutgers Cooperative Extension, NJAES, Rutgers University

1. Test your soil to determine pH and nutrient needs (Rutgers Soil Test Kit)
2. Select tomato varieties best suited for your garden conditions
3. Grow your own tomato seedlings or purchase from a local grower if possible
4. Start tomato seeds in sterilized potting mix 6 weeks before the last frost in your area
5. Prepare the soil with adequate organic matter (compost, peat moss)
6. Work 2 to 3 inches of quality compost into the top 8 to 10 inches of soil
7. Create raised dome shaped beds to grow tomatoes or grow in 5 gallon containers
8. Use black or red plastic as a mulch or use compost around plants to control weeds
9. Harden off tomato transplants before planting in the garden
10. Plant stocky tomato plants where they will get at least 10 hours of direct sunlight.
11. Select tomato transplants free of disease or insect problems at the start
12. Plant tomatoes supported by stakes or a sturdy tomato cage for upright growth
13. Space tomatoes 2 feet or more apart to allow for adequate sunlight, root growth & air flow
14. Keep tomato plants adequately watered but avoid over watering
15. Utilize drip irrigation, soaker hoses or water plants at the base to prevent wet leaves
16. Fertilize according to soil tests and Rutgers NJAES recommendations
17. Prune out suckers as needed depending on tomato variety and RCE recommendations
18. Secure tomato plants to sturdy stakes using cloth or soft sturdy string every 8 inches
19. Protect tomatoes from frost with frost cover, large bucket, row cover or low tunnel
20. Pick tomatoes when fully ripe and still firm
21. Harvest tomatoes on a regular basis to encourage higher yields

## Garden Tours, Folk Music and Food

Attend the garden open house and folk music festival at the EARTH Center in Davidson Mill Pond Park in South Brunswick on August 24, 2019 from 10 am to 4 pm. Taste great tomato varieties and learn about the best gardening techniques while enjoying great music and food. Tour beautiful vegetable, flower, herb and native plant gardens established by the Master Gardeners of Middlesex County. Learn how to grow your own food and start your own small farm.