

# My Favourite Heirloom Tomatoes

by Lindley McPhail

I picked these varieties after several years of trying different varieties of heirloom tomatoes and based my selections on ease of growing, taste and eye appeal. A tomato salad, arranged on a platter with slices of heirloom tomato, torn basil leaves and a rich balsamic vinegar and oil dressing drizzled over is just delightful. Or try using the Cossack Pineapple Ground Cherry as edible décor as it is one of the prettiest.

Information on tomatoes (*Lycopersicon lycopersicum*). Heirloom tomatoes have been around for at least 50 years and they breed true from seed. If you save the seed from a ripe heirloom tomato and plant it out the next year, you should get a tomato plant that is just like the parent. Almost all heirloom tomatoes are indeterminate – they continue to produce fruit for several weeks on long vines. Determinate varieties have shorter vines and will ripen all at once. Unless otherwise indicated, the varieties listed here are indeterminate.

Companions – plant near asparagus, basil, carrots, celery, marigolds, nasturtiums, onions and parsley. Do not plant near cabbage, fennel, kohlrabi or potatoes.

As containers for growing tomato plants, plastic 1 litre milk bags are terrific. Open the top of the bag and cut small drainage holes in the bottom. Roll top edge down by half, fill with potting soil and plant 1–3 seeds. Place bags in plastic trays. As the seedlings grow, unroll the top and add more potting soil. The plant sends out roots along its stem creating a stronger root ball. Simply cut off the bag before planting.

## Red Tomatoes

Amish Paste: Late. Amish heirloom. Despite its wispy foliage, this plant produces lots of pointed, red 10 oz. fruit with excellent flavour. Very meaty with few seeds makes them great for sauces.

Mortgage Lifter: Early. Large (many over 1 lb.), meaty and vigorous red beefsteak. Great flavour and good slicer with few seeds. Plants are highly productive and disease resistant.

Red Zebra: Mid-season. Fire engine red fruit are covered with bright yellow stripes. Similar size as Green Zebra (2"). Sweet and flavourful, this variety is very popular with both home and specialty markets.

### Yellow/Orange Tomatoes

Big Rainbow: Mid-season. One of the prettiest bi-coloured tomatoes, can grow up to 2 lbs. Delicious and sweet. Striking when sliced as the yellow fruit has neon red streaking through the flesh.

Garden Peach: Early. This peach-like yellow fruit is fuzzy with a pink blush, very mild tasting and is a good keeper. Vigorous vines produce an abundant supply of tomatoes.

Moonglow: Mid-season. Deep orange, mid- to large-sized oval tomato with a good flavour. Heavy yields.

### Purple/Black Tomatoes

Cherokee Purple: Late. From Tennessee pre-1890, unique dusty-rose colour with a sweet, rich smokey flavour that rivals Brandywine. Productive plants with potato-leaf foliage and heavy crops of 12 oz. fruits.

Purple Calabash: Late. This unusual indeterminate has been called the ugliest tomato in the world. Fruit is large, 3–6", convoluted and brownish-pink in colour. Its saving grace is the excellent flavour and ability to tolerate extreme drought conditions. 4–6 ft. vines.

### Green/White Tomatoes

Green Zebra: Late. Yellow and green 2" fruits with dark green vertical stripes. Emerald green flesh is juicy, sweet and mild.

Cossack Pineapple Ground Cherry: From the same family as tomatoes, this abundant, sweet and delicious, 1" yellow, pineapple-flavoured fruit can be feasted upon every visit to the garden; can also be dried or used in pies. 2 ft. high bushes spread 3–4 ft. wide. Fruit, which falls to the ground when ripe, grows inside an attractive papery husk. Self-seeds.

Where to buy heirloom tomatoes:

Terra Edibles

Box 164, Foxboro, Ontario, K0K 2B0

613-961-0654

[terraedibles.ca](http://terraedibles.ca)

Terra Edibles Heirloom Seeds

Organically-grown heirloom vegetable, herb and flower seeds. Red Tomatoes, Yellow / Orange Tomatoes, Purple/ Black Tomatoes and Green/ White Tomatoes. All seed packets are \$3.50.

*(Text taken from Terra Edibles catalogue; used with permission)*