

Growing food in small spaces



Tomatoes and basil in hanging baskets

This guidance contains all the additional information required to support your pupils in growing tomatoes and basil, and answering any questions they may have.

This is a great growing project for creating attractive hanging baskets with edible produce. You might even sell the baskets to your school community.

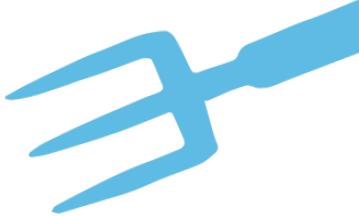
Teacher guidance



Tomatoes and basil

Tumbling tomato varieties are perfect for hanging baskets as their stems trail downwards rather than growing tall. They produce small, sweet cherry tomatoes which should ripen before the summer holidays.

Basil is a compact herb that pairs perfectly with tomatoes, both in cooking and that they enjoy plenty of sunlight for growing.



Sowing seeds

- **Choosing varieties:** For the best results choose a cherry tomato variety such as 'Tumbling Tom', 'Hundreds and Thousands' or 'Garden Pearl'. Their stems will trail down rather than growing tall. You may decide to buy plug plants which will speed up the process of making your baskets.
- **Choosing compost:** Always buy peat-free compost. Choose a fine grade compost for sowing seeds and a more textured multi-purpose compost for planting up. Some makes of have added organic fertiliser which will be useful for container growing.
- **Windowsill growing:** Choose somewhere light, warm & airy to position pots but not in direct sunlight as the young plants might get scorched. Keep the compost moist but not soggy so the seeds germinate. Plastic bags can be fixed over seed trays and pots to create mini greenhouses. Keep an eye out for whitefly and remove them straight away.



Plant care

- Watering and feeding: Yellowing leaves indicate that tomato plants are lacking nutrients and may be in need of a feed. Once the first tiny tomatoes appear, start feeding regularly (once a week) with an organic liquid fertiliser such as liquid seaweed. Basil will also benefit from this feed.
- Containers dry out more quickly than borders. Encourage a daily routine of watering your tomato plants, especially in hot weather, to prevent the fruits from splitting. The compost should always be moist.
- Pinching out: There is no need to pinch-out side shoots with tumbling tomato varieties.
- Harvesting: Pick basil leaves regularly to encourage new growth. Snip just above a leaf joint so it regrows bushier. Pick tomatoes when they are fully ripe for the sweetest flavour.



Protecting tomatoes from pests

The main pests with tomatoes are aphids and whitefly.

- If you see whitefly or aphids appear, you can gently rub them away with your fingers or spray them with a mild soap solution such as washing up liquid.
- If there is a heavy infestation, make sure you pinch out the affected shoots.

Prevention is better than cure! Try the following to avoid whitefly and aphids:

- Encourage insects such as ladybirds and hoverflies as these eat aphids! Plant flowers nearby such as marigolds and nasturtiums to attract them.
- Do not plant tomatoes too close together. Good airflow makes it harder for pests to spread.

All you need to know about...

Fruits vs vegetables

There are culinary (cooking) and biological definitions for fruit and vegetables. In culinary terms, the tomato is a vegetable as it is used in savoury dishes.

In biological terms, the tomato is a fruit as it develops from the flower of a plant and contains seeds inside.



Tomato, Outdoor

Vegetable



garden
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Tomato, Outdoor

Suggested varieties: Gardener's Delight (small); Tigerella (medium)

Vegetable

PLANT



Sow seed 0.1cm deep in pots. Repot if needed. Harden off and transplant 30-45cm apart when first flowers open. Choose fertile soil and sunny sheltered site

GROW



Keep soil moist. Use tomato feed. Tie main stem to a stake. Remove side shoots from cordons (not bushes). Cut off yellowing leaves and those shading lower 'trusses' of fruit

EAT



Remove growing tip after four trusses set. Pick when fully coloured. Ripen green tomatoes at end of season indoors or protect plants from frost with horticultural fleece

Growing guide

Give it a go...

Average time to harvest
16-20 weeks

Equipment needed

Stakes, twine, feed

Germination time
8-11 days

Average plant size
30-150cm tall, 30cm wide

Family group to grow with
Solanaceae: aubergine, potato

Seed saving group
1 - Annual, self-pollinating

Key nutritional content
Vitamin C and vitamin A

Spring Term			Summer Term				Autumn/Winter Term				
J	F	M	A	M	J	J	A	S	O	N	D
				■				■			

■ Sow indoors

■ Sow outdoors

■ Plant out/transplant

■ Harvest

■ Use cloche

2.5cm = 1 inch 30 cm = 1 foot

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Basil

Herbs



Basil

Suggested species: *Ocimum basilicum* (botanical name)

Herbs

PLANT



Sow seed 0.1cm deep in pots. Keep seedlings well ventilated and not too wet. Transplant 30cm apart when 5-10cm tall. Choose fertile soil in sunny sheltered site

GROW



Keep well watered. Regularly pinch out growing tips to encourage bushy plants and delay flowering. Can grow in greenhouses or on a windowsill year round

EAT



Pick young leaves for use fresh or store by freezing, drying, or infusing flavour by submerging leaves in olive oil. Purple leaved varieties have less intense flavour

Growing guide

Give it a go...

Average growing period
From 12 weeks

Equipment needed
None

Germination time
5-10 days

Average plant size
45cm tall, 30cm wide

Family group to grow with
Lamiaceae: lemon balm, sage

Seed saving group
I - Annual, self-pollinating

Key nutritional content
Fresh: calcium, iron, vit. A, vit. C

Spring Term			Summer Term					Autumn/Winter Term			
J	F	M	A	M	J	J	A	S	O	N	D

■ Sow indoors

■ Sow outdoors

■ Plant out/transplant

■ Harvest

■ Use cloche