



International Union of Soil Sciences

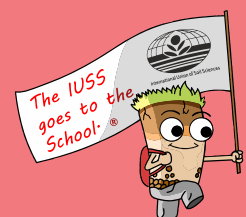
Valentina's tomato plant (*Solanum lycopersicum*)

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Valentina's tomato plant

The tomato (*Solanum lycopersicum*) is a native crop of Central and South America that is currently grown around the world because of its delicious taste. And for being an excellent source of vitamins A, C, and K, as well as potassium, iron, and lycopene, which is a powerful natural antioxidant.

That is why it is part of the diet of millions of people since it is used fresh or processed in hundreds of your favorite dishes.



Hi, I am Valentina, and I am going to tell you how I made my tomato patch in the garden of my house.

The tomato is an annual herbaceous plant that is ideal for urban garden. We can grow it in the soil of our patio or in pots, window boxes, and boxes on our terrace or balcony.

Something critical for the tomato is the temperature, its optimal production is around 22°C , so spring-

summer is the best times to grow it. Tomatoes suffer a lot due to low temperatures and frost, so we can't cultivate them in cold areas or seasons. However, they can adapt well in temperate valleys with average temperatures of no less than 17°C.

We can start our tomato plant with seeds, although we can also buy seedlings ready to be transplanted to our garden.



Before sowing or transplanting our tomato plants, we must prepare the place where we will sow or transplant them definitively.

If we are going to do it directly on the ground of our garden, we must remove the soil. To improve drainage and thus avoid waterlogging, mix the soil with compost, a little rice husk, or coconut fiber. With this mixture, we will form a base of about 40 cm wide and about 10cm high. In the middle of the bed, dig a small hole, deposit 2 to 3 seeds or our tomato plantlet, cover, and press the soil firmly over the seeds or around the plant and water with a watering can.

If we use pots, we will put one plant per pot, and if we use boxes, we will put the plants that fit, always considering that they must have a separation of 30 cm between plants and 50 cm between rows.

Since the tomato is an herbaceous plant, when it reaches a certain height, it can't stand on its own. And it is necessary to provide it with a support that keeps the plant upright so that the flowers, branches, and fruits are not in contact with the ground, which could cause them damage.

For that, you can ask your parents for help to place a couple of firm sticks at the ends of the beds. In between the two twigs, we must tighten a wire, from which we can tie small strips or ribbons that hold the stem and branches with fruits of our tomato plants.



Photo owned by Rainer Horn



You should prune your plants to avoid too many twigs and leave one or two main axes, trimming them when they reach the height of the wire you placed. Also, remove the excess of small axillary shoots, and we can even thin the flowers to have bigger fruits.

Do not forget to water your garden, but be careful that the soil does not become waterlogged because this could affect our crop.

If we see that certain insects are eating our tomato plant, do not worry. With the help of your parents, you can make some preparations that will help us stop those little friends.

A very effective remedy is garlic extract; to do this, you can ask your parents to liquefy 50 grams of garlic in a liter of water.

Strain this mixture to apply it with a sprayer, and moisten all the plants for three days in a row. You can also control insects by mixing a liter of water with two caps of diluted liquid soap and spraying it as above.

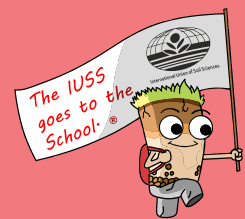
To control fungi, we can add a spoonful of vinegar for each liter of water and applying it twice a week.

Your garden is organic, so you will see a few bugs around. Many of them are good and will not affect our tomato plant; others will eat a leaf or chop a few of our fruits, yet we can still eat them, and I assure you that most of them will be perfect.

When the tomatoes are starting to turn red, they are ready to be harvested. I hope you enjoy the delicious tomatoes you will be harvesting.



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Editor: Dra. Laura Bertha Reyes Sánchez

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