

## Best Tomato Varieties--heirloom Vs. Hybrid

Tomatoes from the grocery store shelves taste like—NOTHING! Why? Most of the tomatoes purchased from grocery stores have been harvested days before they reach the grocery, treated to turn red, and bred to stay firm and not bruise on the shelves. Plant breeding for the last fifty years has concentrated on producing a tomato that can survive anything—except for a taste test.

Gardeners and tomato aficionados alike have given up on the produce aisle for anything other than garnish. Instead, they turn to seed and plant catalogues to find tasty varieties to grow. When viewing a plant catalogue of tomato seed sources, you will be confronted with hundreds of varieties. Huge and tiny, purple, red, yellow and orange tomatoes. Perfectly round, almost flat, and lemon-shaped tomatoes. Seed catalogues highlight another variable to understand regarding tomato growing: heirloom versus hybrid tomatoes.

### Heirloom Tomatoes

Tasty and unique, heirloom varieties are endless. This category of plant is where you will find purple, orange and yellow tomatoes sharing catalogue space with red ones. Heirloom varieties are "open pollinated" plants, which means that if you harvest seeds from a plant, prepare them, save them, and plant them next year, you will grow the same plant. Heirloom varieties were developed over time, in isolated gardens and communities, thus developing unique characteristics.

Heirlooms require particular growing conditions, and each variety is different. The key to success with heirlooms is choosing a variety that is well suited to your growing conditions. Because heirloom tomatoes have not been bred for generations to promote vigor and disease resistance, these varieties need a little bit of extra care. They are, however, worth the extra work. Heirlooms will produce lush, flavorful tomatoes of every shape, size and hue, for every culinary taste or need.

### Hybrid Tomatoes

These tomatoes are the result of two different tomato varieties being "crossed" or joined, and the seeds harvested from the resulting plants. Hybrid tomato seeds will produce the tomato with hybrid characteristics for only one plant generation. If you harvest your tomatoes from the hybrid plant and plant those seeds next year, you will not have the same plant.

Hybrid tomatoes have been bred for disease resistance, uniformity, and ability to withstand mechanical harvesting, packing and shipping. Little time has been spent in enhancing flavor in hybrid tomatoes. Much like hybrid tea roses, hybrid tomatoes may be nice to look at, but they have few other desirable attributes.

For large-scale commercial tomato growers, hybrid tomatoes are a great help. For consumers expecting bright red tomatoes in the middle of winter, hybrids are a way to consume. For home gardeners, Heirloom varieties produce yields as large, and much more flavorful. Home gardeners have enough time an attention to successfully grow heirloom tomatoes and bring out their best qualities.

### Choosing the Right Variety

Whether Heirlooms or Hybrids are your tomato of choice, you much choose tomato varieties that are well suited to your growing environment. Climates with high heat and humidity will help certain varieties flourish, while colder climates with shorter growing seasons require cultivation of plants that set fruit and mature faster.

For a comprehensive resource on tomato varieties, both heirloom and hybrid, consult How To Grow Juicy Tasty Tomatoes available from [www.bestjuicytomatoes.com](http://www.bestjuicytomatoes.com)

### About the Author

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