

HOW TO STAKE A TOMATO PLANT

Tomato plants are naturally a sprawling vine, which would grow across the ground unless you train them onto a support. Tomatoes come in two plant types called Determinate and Indeterminate.

- Determinate varieties reach a certain height and stop growing and then they fruit.
- Indeterminate varieties continue to grow and produce tomatoes all along the stems throughout the growing season. Most tomatoes are indeterminate, and need supporting.

Staking your tomatoes makes it easy to manage fruiting and minimise diseases. It allows easy access to the plant, more light on the plant and better airflow around your plant. Tomato stems are brittle and stakes support them as they produce heavy fruit.

There are many ways to support your tomato plant, but the easiest is by staking it by using a straight or spiral stake.

HOW TO STAKE A TOMATO PLANT

- Firstly, decide on the type of stake that you want to use. The three most common stakes are made from bamboo canes, wood, or plastic. There are also plastic spiral stakes available.
- It's all the same to the tomato plant, so it comes down to personal preference on; convenience, appearance, price, durability, or if it is a natural sustainable stake made from natural materials.
- Push the stake in just to the side of the seedling avoiding the roots as much as possible. Make sure it is in straight.
- The stake needs to be in far enough that it can hold the plant once the heavy fruit starts to appear.
- Plants grown on stakes should be checked regularly and re-tied to the stake as they grow.
- Tie the main stem 20 to 30cm above the ground to the stake. It is important to minimise damage to the plant, not too tight that it will cut the plant
- Work your way up and tie at similar intervals depending on the plant size and shape. It is better to have multiple ties on the plant than just a couple that may cut into it.

You can use materials such as coated twist ties, string, plastic clips and zip ties to tie your plant to the stake.



HELPFUL TIPS

- Stake the plant as a seedling to avoid damaging roots on larger plants with bigger roots.
- Make sure the stake is tall enough to accommodate the full grown size of the plant, it is easier to have a large stake than have to tie stakes together down the track.
- Check regularly and adjust the ties as the plant grows to avoid the tie cutting into growing stems.
- Natural materials such as biodegradable twine are great as ties, they are more flexible and softer on the plant, and once finished with can be composted with the vines.

