



SET THE TABLE FROM YOUR GARDEN

June 2012

Supporting Tomato Vines



Young plants starting out on the supports

We grow many tomato varieties each and every summer in the trial garden and we've tried many different methods of supporting the tall, vining indeterminate varieties that grow heavy with fruit and foliage at maturity. For example, we used traditional heavy wire cages for a number of years, but found that the large, dense plants got too crowded inside the cages. The packed tomato foliage made it hard to find and harvest all the ripe fruit (especially on cherry tomatoes that bear heavy fruit clusters) and the decreased air circulation at the plant centers made them more susceptible to pests and diseases.

We have also tried staking each plant, placing 2 strong stakes on either side and using twine to hold the plants up, but the big vines with lots of fruit always seem to get away from us by harvest time, with branches at odd angles and heavy vines threatening to topple over. Over the years, we've experimented with different ways of pruning the plants to keep the vines to a manageable size, but not with satisfactory results. All of these methods have been very labor intensive and, in the end, simply did not work very well in our conditions.

Finally, over last two seasons, I have worked out a new support system, with the tomato vines spread up and over angled wire fencing that works great! This method allows the plants to spread out and grow flat on the fencing like an espalier so that the ripe fruit can be easily harvested from either side of the fencing, and can be used for a row of tomatoes or just a single plant.



The fruit is nicely exposed and dangles from the underside of the structure making it easy to harvest.

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June in the Trial Garden

by Lindsay Del Carlo, Trial Garden Manager

New Gadgets, Successful Deer Repellent, Potting Mix Comparison and Pot Recycling

This season, we are trying out a new gadget, the Plant Cam (www.wingscapes.com). This little programmable, waterproof outdoor time lapse camera takes a series of photos or videos at specified intervals. We are growing our organic **Cinderella's Carriage Pumpkins** and think it will be fun to use the Plant Cam to document the pumpkin as it grows and matures over the season. The little camera is mounted on a post in the background of the plants we programmed it to take a photo at 9 AM every morning for the pumpkin's entire growth cycle. Then we will format the photos into a time lapse video. Stay tuned this fall when we put it all together and watch the months of growth in just 30 seconds!



Here's a new product that we have been using very successfully and so can recommend: Deer and Rabbit Repellent by Plant Pro-Tec (www.plantprotec.com). If you cannot build a deer fence, this is a great alternative. They are little plastic spikes that attach to the plant just like a clothespin or can be stuck in the ground around plants, and their scent repels deer successfully for months. The active ingredient is garlic oil and it is 100% organic. They have worked beautifully for us, even on roses (which deer adore) in a very deer-prone area. We haven't had any bunnies which these are also recommended to repel, so can't comment on that use, but we bet they will work just as well.

We continually try out different potting soil mix for container growing, by putting the same plant variety in different brands. Fox Farm Ocean Forest (www.foxfarmfertilizer.com) is the mix that we have found the best so far, but we are always trialing other brands as we come across them. In the photo, you can clearly tell the big difference between our preferred potting soil and competitor brands. The organic Jade Gem baby lettuces on the right are deep green, vigorous and full, while on the left the very same little lettuces, planted at the same time, our very pale with small, stunted heads. It has really been amazing to experience how much difference there is in the results between different brands of potting soil mix.



Along with our Trial Garden, we also have extensive landscape gardens and do a lot of plantings in them. This means that we end up with a lot of plastic nursery pots. Every season we gather up our plethora of black plastic pots and make a special trip back to the nursery to turn them back in. There are many nurseries that are happy to take back the empty pots and it is a great way to reuse and recycle. Often you can redeem them for cash or credit, so everybody wins.

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Best Wishes,
Renee Shepherd

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Recipe of the Month

[Broccoli and Cashew Salad](#)



Broccoli's natural sweetness paired with the nutty, rich taste of cashews and a spicy note of cilantro with a creamy dressing. This salad also makes a wonderful take-along for picnics and potluck.



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