Growing Tomatoes at Tahoe: Crib Notes

Indeterminate tomato varieties produce flowers then set fruit over a short period of time

Determinate varieties produce fewer fruit over a longer period

Smaller sized tomatoes usually need less time to ripen

Start seeds indoors 6-8 week prior to last frost – March to early April
Seed bed soil temperature 65-75 degrees for germination

If buying plant choose short season varieties
Be sure to weather harden your transplants

Transplant to area with warmth and sunlight
If container planting use dark colored pots

Transplant to well drained fertile soil – pH just slightly acidic

Transplant seedling deep into soil at least to first leaf

Wait about 2 weeks before fertilizing
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For Tahoe/Truckee or similar cool short season areas – keep plants warm

When transplanting, open planting hole a day or two in advance to warm soil

If container planting use dark colored pots
Plant on south facing exposure - avoid north exposures if possible
Consider planting horizontally nearer to surface (warmer soil)
Plant near fence or wall for radiated evening warmth
Consider planting through perforated clear or red tinted plastic
Consider placing large rock, gallon jug of colored water, or water curtain around plant

Do not place mulch around plant base (cools soil)
Schedule watering for late morning or early afternoon (water is warmer)
Consider covering plants at night when flowering if temperature drop below 45
Cover plants at any sign of frost
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Provide trellis or other means to support plant
  Remove any suckering stems
  Remove any excessive flower sets (many flowers delays ripening)

Fertilize ever 2-3 weeks with 5-5-5 or equivalent 1 pound/100 square ft.

If plant looks very robust but not setting fruit stop fertilizing and cut back watering
  A slightly stressed plant often will set more flowers/fruit

Pests and disease
  Aphids – Spray plant with soapy water solution
  Hornworms – hand pick and squash
  Whiteflies – Spray plant with soapy water solution

Powdery mildew – water less and earlier in day
Crown rot – water less and not directly at stem area
Bottom fruit rot – possibly from overhead watering methods
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Harvest and end of season tips

Frost damaged fruit usually cannot be saved – try using immediately cutting out damaged portions

To ripen green tomatoes remover whole bract and ripen in paper bag with apple/banana

Remove as much of plant as possible to assist in fruit ripening

Consider pulling up whole plant and end of year to ripen the last tomatoes.

Avoid composting old tomato plants – dispose of plant materials

Try not to plant tomatoes/potatoes/peppers or eggplants in same garden location successive years.