

# Growing Tomatoes in the Desert SW

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## The challenges we face:

Low fertility soil  
High temperatures  
Pests and diseases

### Challenge: Low fertility soil

First question what type of soil do you have?

Sandy:

No organic matter  
Doesn't hold water  
So, water frequently with smaller amount

Clay:

Holds water  
But can hold water away from plants  
Water infrequently but deeply

Loam:

Equal distribution of sand, silt and clay  
Plants love this!

If you have low fertility soil:

Amend with organic matter (compost)  
Use a cover crop OR  
Raised beds  
Containers

### Challenge: High temperatures

Select smaller tomato varieties  
Select heat tolerant varieties  
Start early (but be prepared to provide protection from extreme cold)  
Provide some shade for tomato plants

Water in the morning  
Use mulch

### **Challenge: Pests and diseases**

Use resistant varieties  
Inspect plants frequently and closely  
Use floating row cover as insect barrier  
Use companion plants  
Attract beneficial insects

### **Companion Plants:**

Onions, carrots, chiles, asparagus, basil, chives,  
parsley and garlic

### **Insectary Plants (intended to attract beneficial insects):**

Cosmos, dill, alyssum, and California Bluebell, Plains Coreopsis and Buckwheat

### **Varieties that do well here**

Hybrids: Celebrity, Bobcat, Better Boy, Rutgers 250 and Big Beef.

Open Pollinators or heirlooms: large size - Paul Robeson, Berkley Pink Tie Dye, Marglobe, Sioux; small size – Baxter Bush\*, Sophie's Choice\*, Silvery Fir Tree\*, Flamenco\*, Jaune Flamme, Solar Flare, Sol Guld\*, Abu Rawan\*, San Marzano Lungo\*. Cherry and grape tomato varieties do well.

\*good in containers (preferably large)

### **Purchasing Plants**

- Look for vigorous plants
- Avoid wilted or stressed plants
- Avoid discolored or malformed plants
- Plants that have set fruit early in the season may not be able to support the fruit (especially of larger varieties)

More gardening information can be found at [sandovalmastergardeners.org](http://sandovalmastergardeners.org). Gardening questions can be sent to: [emailhelpline@sandovalmastergardeners.org](mailto:emailhelpline@sandovalmastergardeners.org).



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