



Garden Notes

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GN 109

CHERRY TOMATOES

CULTURE: Cherry tomatoes have small, cherry-to golf ball-sized fruit that is often used in salads. They are heat-loving plants that range in size from dwarf to 7-footers. Give them full sun, soil that is well amended with compost and a cage or stake to grow on. Plant seedlings in the garden after all danger of frost is past. Keep the soil around new transplants moist for the first 3-4 weeks. Water established plants when the soil dries to about 2-3 inches deep. Apply enough water to wet the root zone thoroughly. Since weather and the depth of rooting vary, the right interval for applying water in the summer can vary from 1-3 times a week to once every 10-14 days. Plants are best irrigated by using soaker hoses, drip irrigation, or any means that applies water slowly without wetting the foliage. To boost growth, use fish emulsion or other mild nitrogen fertilizer when the plants set their first fruit and every 4-6 weeks thereafter. Too much nitrogen makes plants grow leaves at the expense of fruit. Cherry tomatoes are notorious for splitting before or right after they have been picked with some varieties more prone to split than others.

VARIETIES: The six cherry tomato varieties listed below were grown in the Fair Oaks Horticulture Center Vegetable Demonstration Area during the spring and summer of 2007. Because these varieties grow prolifically and must be contained or trained to control their sprawl, each plant was grown inside cages made of concrete reinforcing wire. One row containing each variety was heavily mulched with straw to prevent the soil from drying out. A second identical row was mulched with red plastic, as research has shown that infrared rays from the plastic could increase production.

VARIETY	TYPE	**DAYS TO MATURITY	CHARACTERISTICS
Black Cherry	Hybrid	65	Reddish brown to purple; may have green shoulders
Green Grape	Heirloom	70	Green, turning amber when ripe; short, compact plants
Snow White	Hybrid	75	Ivory, pale yellow when ripe
Sun Sugar FT Hybrid	Hybrid	62	Orange, borne in long clusters; crack resistant; resistant to fusarium wilt and tobacco mosaic virus
Sweet Baby Girl	Hybrid	65	Dark red, grows in long clusters; resistant to tobacco mosaic virus
Sweet Gold FT Hybrid	Hybrid	60	Bright yellow-gold; resistant to fusarium wilt and tobacco mosaic virus

** Days to Maturity – The approximate time between transplanting to the garden and the appearance of ripe fruit.

Written by UC Master Gardener Gail Pothour, July 2007.

Edited by Judy McClure, UC Master Gardener Coordinator.

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