

## Growing Tomatoes: A Guide to Bush, Cordon, and Vine Varieties

Tomatoes are one of the most rewarding plants to grow, offering a delicious harvest from your own garden. There are three main types: bush, cordon (or indeterminate), and vine (determinate). Each has different growth habits and requires specific care. Let's dive in!

### 1. Bush Tomatoes (Determinate)

Bush tomatoes are compact and stop growing once fruit has set on the top shoot. They are ideal for smaller gardens, containers, or for those who prefer a less labour-intensive option. If you are short on space we would recommend trying some of our dwarf bust tomatoes which are suitable for growing in large pots on patios, balconies or even inside on window sills. Some varieties can even be used in hanging baskets (as well as dwarf trailing vine tomatoes).

#### Key Characteristics:



- **Compact Growth:** They form a bushy plant that doesn't require staking or pruning as much as cordon varieties.
- **Synchronized Fruiting:** Most of their fruit ripens around the same time, making them great for bottling or making sauces.
- **Good for Containers:** Their smaller size makes them perfect for pots and hanging baskets.

#### How to Grow:

1. **Planting:** Choose a sunny spot with well-draining soil. If planting in a container, select one that is at least 12-18 inches in diameter and use good quality compost.
2. **Support (Optional):** While not always necessary, a small framework or stake can help support the plant once it's laden with fruit.
3. **Watering:** Keep the soil consistently moist, especially during fruit development.
4. **Fertilising:** Feed with a balanced fertiliser every 2-4 weeks until flowers develop then switch to a tomato fertiliser to maximise cropping.
5. **Pruning:** Minimal pruning is needed. You can remove any yellowing leaves or branches touching the ground.

## 2. Cordon Tomatoes (Indeterminate)

Cordon tomatoes, also known as indeterminate tomatoes, grow as a single stem and can reach impressive heights if left unchecked. They continuously produce fruit throughout the growing season until the first frost.

### Key Characteristics:



- **Continuous Growth:** These plants will keep growing taller and producing flowers and fruit as long as conditions allow.
- **Staking is Essential:** Due to their height and heavy fruit load, strong support is crucial.
- **Regular Pruning:** “Suckers” (side shoots that emerge between the main stem and a leaf branch) must be removed to direct energy into fruit production and maintain a single stem.
- **Extended Harvest:** You’ll get a steady supply of tomatoes over a longer period.

### How to Grow:

1. **Planting:** Choose a very sunny location with rich, well-draining soil.
2. **Staking/Support:** Install a tall, sturdy stake, trellis, or string support at planting time. As the plant grows, gently tie the main stem to the support every 8-12 inches.
3. **Watering:** Maintain consistent moisture, especially once fruits begin to form. Avoid overhead watering to reduce disease risk.
4. **Fertilising:** Feed regularly with a tomato-specific fertiliser once flowers appear.
5. **Pruning (Suckering):** This is vital! Regularly check for suckers in the leaf axils (where the leaf stalk joins the main stem). Pinch them out when they are small (1-2 inches) to ensure the plant focuses its energy on the main stem and fruit development.

### 3. Vine Tomatoes (Determinate)

Vine tomatoes are another type of determinate tomato, but unlike the compact bush varieties, they typically grow a bit larger and still benefit from some support. Their growth and fruiting habit is similar to bush types in that they set most of their fruit at once, but they can produce a higher yield than smaller bush varieties.

#### Key Characteristics:



- **Determinate Growth:** Like bush tomatoes, they grow to a predetermined size and then stop, with most fruits ripening around the same time.
- **Larger than Bush, Smaller than Cordon:** They generally grow larger than typical bush varieties but won't reach the sprawling heights of indeterminate cordon types.
- **Good for Support:** While not as demanding as cordon tomatoes, they definitely benefit from stakes or frameworks to keep the fruit off the ground and support the heavier branches.
- **Concentrated Harvest:** Ideal if you want a large batch of tomatoes for processing (sauces, bottling) all at once.

#### How to Grow:

1. **Planting:** Choose a sunny location with rich, well-drained soil. Space them a bit wider than bush tomatoes, but not as far apart as cordon types.
2. **Support:** Use sturdy stakes or tomato cages. Install them when planting to avoid disturbing the roots later. As the plant grows, gently guide it through the cage or tie it loosely to the stake.
3. **Watering:** Consistent watering is key to prevent blossom end rot and fruit splitting. Aim for deep watering rather than frequent, shallow watering.
4. **Fertilising:** Start with a balanced fertiliser and switch to tomato fertiliser once flowering begins to encourage fruit production.
5. **Pruning:** Less pruning is required than for cordon varieties. You can remove suckers below the first flower cluster, but leaving some upper suckers can help produce more foliage to shade ripening fruit from sunscald. Remove any yellowing or diseased leaves.