

Tomato Terminology

***Indeterminate** plants continue growing and setting fruit all season until frost. The plants usually get quite large and require caging or trellising.

Determinate plants stop growing and setting fruit at some point during the season and produce fruit over a shorter period of time. They are often referred to as “bush” tomatoes and are the best choice for containers, small gardens, or those gardeners frustrated with out-of-control tomato vines. Unless dwarf or trailing, determinate plants also benefit from staking or caging.

****Open-pollinated** plants are those that can consistently produce viable seed through pollination, so the seed from a fruit can be saved to produce successive generations. The specific variety can be maintained by pollination with itself and crosses can be made by pollination with other open-pollinated varieties. If an open-pollinated variety is around long enough it may eventually be called an heirloom.

Heirloom plants are varieties that have been created through traditional selective breeding and crossing of open-pollinated varieties and have been around for many generations (of people). Heirlooms are always open-pollinated. Some people feel heirloom tomatoes have the best flavors.

Hybrid plants are also created by crossing two or more varieties. However their seed is often inviable and so cannot always be saved and/or crossed with other varieties. They often have higher yields, better disease resistance, and are more adaptable to a wide variety of growing conditions. Hybrid does not mean the same thing as GMO (in which the DNA from one organism is artificially incorporated into the DNA of another). We do not carry any GMO plants.