



Tomato Planting Calendar

Your Month-by-Month Guide to Growing Tomatoes in East Texas

Time for East Texas Weather - Zone 8B - Harrison County

East Texas has its own rhythm - hot summers, mild winters, and a wide variety of soil ranges. From deep loamy to silty soils to variable clay content, we've got it all. This calendar is built around Marshall, TX and the surrounding Harrison County area, so every tip is calibrated for YOUR growing season, not some generic national guide.

JANUARY + FEBRUARY Plan, Prepare & Start Seeds

In January, the average temperature is too cold to plant so use this month to prepare and not plant.

- Test garden soil pH (target 6.2-6.8 for tomatoes)
- Stock up on supplies: stakes, cages, fertilizer, mulch
- Prepare your garden beds by adding 2-3 inches of compost
- Start seeds indoors 6-8 weeks before the last frost
- Use seed starting mix - NOT regular potting soil
- Keep seeds at 70-80 degrees for germination (consider using a heat mat)
- Provide 14-16 hours of light daily under grow lights
- Thin seedlings to one per cell once they sprout
- Late February is earliest time to transplant
- Have frost covers on standby if you choose to transplant in February

The last frost date for our area is mid-late March.

MARCH + APRIL

Transplanting & Plant Establishment

- If you planted in late Feb, remove frost covers on warm days and replace at night when needed
- If not yet planted, prepare your garden beds by adding in compost
- Mid-March onward: safe to transplant without frost covers
- PRIME PLANTING WINDOW: March 15-April 15
- Plant transplants 18 -24 inches apart
- Bury stems deep, up to the first set of true leaves
- Water deeply at transplanting, then every 2-3 days

**Temps start warming fast in March/April.
Don't let newly transplanted seedlings dry out.**

MAY

Feed, Stake & Watch for Blooms

- Stake or cage plants before they begin to grow too big
- Fertilize regularly (every 2-3 weeks)
- Prune suckers on indeterminate plants
- Watch for blooms to begin turning into tomatoes

JUNE

Fruit Set & Heat Management

- Water consistently - 1-2 inches per week. (Deep not shallow watering)
- Mulch heavily to help keep soil temp down and moisture stable
- Watch for blossom end rot
- Scout for hornworms, aphids and stinkbugs weekly and treat as needed

JULY

Peak Harvest & Heat Watch

- Harvest when fruit color is blush
- Water ever 1-2 days; Heat is intense
- Prune lower leaves to improve airfly and reduce disease
- Apply foliar sprays and/or insecticides according to instructions only (early mornings are typically the best time)
- If temps hit 100 degrees, plants will pause setting fruit temporarily

AUGUST

Refresh & Plan for Fall Crop

- Cut plants back by $\frac{1}{3}$ to help rejuvenate for fall production
- Start new tomato seedlings or prepare to purchase new transplants
- Fertilize refreshed plants to encourage new growth
- Deew water established plants - August rain is unreliable
- Remove any diseased foliage and dispose

SEPTEMBER

Fall Planting & Second Harvest

- Transplant fall seedlings
- As temperatures cool, plants will rebound and flower again
- Resume regular fertilizing schedule
- Pest pressure drops in fall
- Harvest continues from spring plants that were cut back

OCTOBER

Late Harvest & Prep

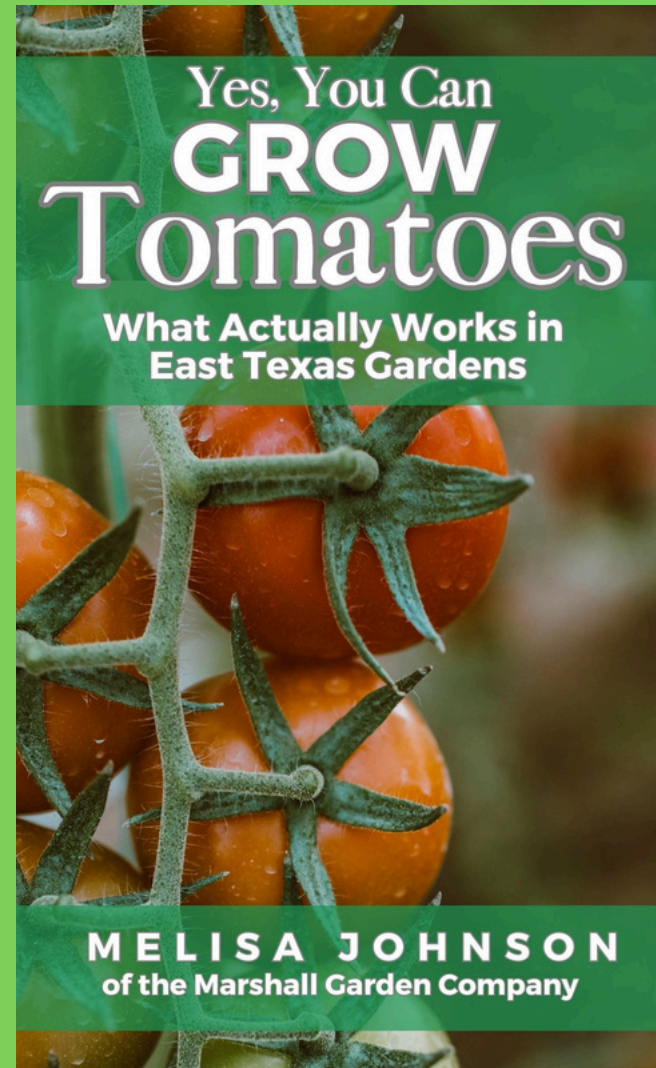
- Harvest heavily before first frost warning
- Green tomatoes can ripen indoors (wrap in newspaper or brown paper bag)
- begin reducing water as temperatures cool
- Take notes on what worked well this season
- First frost us usually in mid-late November

NOVEMBER Season Close

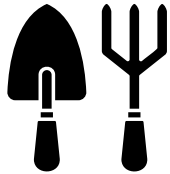
- Harvest all remaining tomatoes before first frost
- Pull spent plants and compost healthy material
- Do NOT compost diseased plants
- Clean and store cages, stakes and tools
- Consider adding a layer of compost and mulch to your beds as they “go to sleep for winter”

DECEMBER Rest & Learn

- Review your garden journal noting what thrived and what didn't
- Deep clean and sharpen garden tools
- Research varieties to try next year
- Celebrate your harvest!



WANT TO GO DEEPER?
Get the full guide --- **Yes, You Can Grow Tomatoes** --- available for \$4.99 at MarshallGardenCo.com written specifically for East Texas gardeners.
No jargon. No fuss. Just tomatoes.



Don't Plant Too Early (or Too Late)

Trust us! East Texas weather can be tricky. Plant too early, a freeze will kill your plants. Plant too late, and the heat will stop them from thriving.



Water Deep, Not Daily.

Roots go where the water goes and you want strong roots that are deep. Train them to dig deep and your plants will be so much happier (and so will you).



Mulch heavy.

Keeps your soil cool in the summer and warm in the winter with mulch. Your plants will like it and your weeds won't like it. Plus, it looks pretty and who doesn't like pretty things in the garden

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Subscribe to our email newsletter from Marshall Garden Co. You'll get seasonal planting reminders, garden tips that work for real people, and behind-the-scenes updates as we grow.

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