

To produce extra early fruit of a good quality the tomatoes are sometimes trained to one stem and supported by stakes or wires. Following this method they can be planted 12 to 16 inches apart in the rows and 3 feet between the rows, or 18 by 18 inches with 18 inches to 2 feet between the rows. This method will be further described in a following section.

The usual method for planting tomatoes is to run out a furrow five inches deep and mark off with a wooden marker the places where the plants are to go. The planting should be done in late afternoon, if possible, on a cool day. The time of month for planting the extra early crop depends on the season, but the sooner they are out in the field the sooner the crop is ready, depending, of course, on frost conditions. This time varies from May 20th to June 5th, according to district and weather conditions. As much as possible of the soil around the roots in the box or pot should be planted. This can be done by thoroughly soaking the soil while in the boxes. The box or paper pot can then be easily removed, leaving the earth intact around the roots. This should be set in the furrow and a couple of inches of soil drawn in around the plant. It is a good plan to draw the soil fairly well up around the stem to give plenty of support in case of wind. By using this furrow method there will be a large part of the furrow left open after planting. This can easily be filled with an ordinary garden rake, or with scuffler working the field crossways. An ideal tomato plant should be six to eight inches in length from top of roots to top of stem, should be one-half inch through the stem at the base, and the leaves should be a dark green color. It is a good thing to have the plant in flower, if not already having some small fruits formed on it, before it is set out in the field. The roots should fill one quart berry box or a six-inch pot. A plant with the foregoing qualifications can be depended upon to give a heavy yield in good soil.

On large acreages, tomatoes can be planted successfully with a horse transplanter. Of course the handling is considerably rougher, and the plants cannot be expected to give as good results. The transplanter opens up the furrow and draws the soil in around the plant which has been set by hand.

STAKING, PRUNING, ETC.—While the training of tomatoes to one stem and tying this to a stake for support has been carried on for a number of years, it is but recently that vegetable growers have paid any attention to this method of raising tomatoes. In many cases the more progressive vegetable growers are trying this method out with more or less success. It is a method which will most surely be adopted by those desiring clean, early fruit, for the fruit will ripen from a week to ten days earlier than by the ordinary flat method. The fruit will not require cleaning, as it does not come in contact with the ground, and the loss through fungus diseases and insects will be minimized for the same reasons. The cost of production is somewhat higher due to increased attention, but the yield is larger owing to the shorter distance apart at which the plants can be set.

PLANTING.—For the individual stake method set the plants 12 to 16 inches apart in rows three feet apart. Stakes, five to six feet long, two and a half inches square, are driven into the soil three inches from the plant. Another method is to build what might be termed a temporary wire fence. Place posts 25 to 30 feet apart, and attach wires lengthwise to these every 12 to 15 inches. Stretch the wires tight, and staple them securely. These fences should be three feet apart. The plants can be set as close as 12 inches but 15 inches usually gives better results.

Another method is to plant the tomatoes 18 by 18 inches in the form of a square. Four stakes are then driven in, one to each plant and the tops drawn together and tied with string or wire.