



The Achiltibuie Garden

...let's grow

Tomato planter

For growing 2 tomatoes by the traditional cordon method.

Kit contents:

1 planter with closed grommets	minipropagator
1 bracing strip	7 litres <i>Gold</i> growing medium
2 pyramid pots with wicks	3-part tomato feed set (A, B & C)
1 funnel	2 tomato hooks
1 planter fleece	1 packet tomato seeds
1 long planter spacer	
30ml measure	

Raising seedlings

Assemble the minipropagator according to the instructions attached to it. Sow individual tomato seeds spaced about 1" (2.5cm) apart in the minipropagators provided. The seeds should be planted on the surface of the *Gold* growing medium, then given a light covering of more *Gold*.

Place the fleece cover loosely over the top of the propagator and keep it in a warm position (20-25°C) until the seeds begin to germinate. Check the propagators daily after the fourth day from sowing, as it is very important to place germinated seed in a good light position as soon as the first seeds germinate. There is no need to remove the fleece covering, which will maintain humidity while allowing light and air to get to the tender young seedlings.

Allow the seedlings to grow two full pairs of "true leaves" before transferring them to the pyramid pots in the tomato planter kit. True tomato leaves are serrated and hairy, as opposed to the first pair of smooth edged seed leaves.

Setting up your planter system

Slide a bracing strip onto end of each planter and move it to half way along the planter.

Ensure that the capillary matting wicks are threaded through the slots in the bases so that the ends protrude below the pots. Thread the tomato hook twine down through one of the slits in the base of the pot to one side of the wick, then back up into the pot through the other slit. Securely tie the end of the twine to itself to hold it in place. Completely fill the base of the pyramid pot with *Gold* growing medium then feed the tomato hook and its twine through the round hole in the pyramid pot top. Clip the pyramid pot top on to the base.

Place one pot at each end of the planter; the tabs on the rim of the pot base which secure the lid in place should hang over the long edges of the planter. Place a black plastic spacer between the pots in the planter. Add nutrient mix (seedling strength) to the planter and leave the pots until the *Gold* is damp.

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When you are ready to transplant the seedlings, remove each pot in turn from the planter. Gently lift a seedling from the minipropagator together with any adhering *Gold* by placing a teaspoon or plant label well under the root system as a lever and hold only the seed leaf of the young plant to transfer it to the pyramid pot. Never touch the fragile stem or the true leaves of the seedling, to avoid permanent plant damage. Add more *Gold* to bring the level up to just below the rim of the pot. The seedling should be positioned so that the seed leaves are just at the level of the *Gold*. Shake the pyramid pot gently to settle the seedling, adding a little more *Gold* if necessary to bring the level up again. As before, don't compress the *Gold* growing medium too much as this will compact the mixture and affect the aeration properties of the *Gold*. If you are using plants which have been raised in peat or soil based composts, then gently shake off excess compost from the root ball before introducing the plants to the *Gold*. It is not essential to remove all compost or peat from the roots as over handling will cause damage to the roots. Cover young plants with fleece to provide a perfect micro-climate.

Attach the tomato hook emerging from the top surface of the *Gold* to a very secure point as high as possible directly above the planter: 1.5 – 2m is ideal. As your tomato plants grow, gently wind the main stem around the twine and pinch out the side shoots.

Using tomato liquid feed

The tomato feeds are constituted to suit the needs of plants at all stages of growth and comprise three components: A, B and C. These are provided in concentrated form and must be diluted before using. The concentrates must never be mixed directly, but should be added to the water separately.

Some plants are more hungry than others, and an individual plant's needs vary at different stages of its growth. The dilution rates given below are, therefore, a guide and may be adjusted according to the types of plants you want to grow.

If you like, you can make up large quantities of diluted feed for each of the three parts and store them in lidded containers until you need to top up your planter.

Tips on feeding your tomatoes

Frequency of feeding is determined by the rate of plant growth and the rate of transpiration of water from the leaf area (this is related to the air temperature and humidity). In hot weather, for example, the plant will lose more water through its leaves (transpiration), so it will require to take up more water. We suggest that you cut the strength of the feed by 25% in these conditions with no detrimental effect on the plants.

You can help to reduce transpiration rates by removing the lower leaves of the tomato plants, leaving only the top 75-90cm (2.5 – 3 feet) of the plant with leaves on.

The dilution rates given are therefore a guide and may be adjusted as necessary. Use the instructions given to make up batches of diluted feed for the appropriate stage of growth of your plants. By using the three concentrate solutions you can be sure that your plants are getting all of the essential growth elements.

This Tomato feed can also be used for other high-yielding fruiting plants such as cucumbers and courgettes. Less greedy plants will do well on our General purpose feed, or we can supply dilution rates to allow you to use Tomato feed at lower strength for these plants. All our feeds are available from www.thehydroponicum.com or by telephoning The Achiltibuie Garden on 01854 622202.

Dilution rates for different stages of plant growth.

Stage 1: from seedling stage (fully expanded seed leaves) to the third true leaf stage:

Desired EC = approx. 3.0 mS/cm above the EC of make-up water

Make a solution using EQUAL QUANTITIES OF TOMATO A & TOMATO B with water as follows

Volume of diluted solution required	Amount of Tom A	Amount of Tom B	Amount of Tom C
1 litre	10ml	10ml	----
5 litres	50ml	50ml	----
25 litres	250ml	250ml	----

Stage 2: from 3rd true leaf stage to 1st fruit set (small fruit the size of a pea can be seen):

Desired EC = approx. 5.0 mS/cm above the EC of make-up water

Make a solution using 2 PARTS TOMATO A, 1 PART TOMATO B & 1 PART TOMATO C with water as follows:

Volume of diluted solution required	Amount of Tom A	Amount of Tom B	Amount of Tom C
1 litre	20ml	10ml	10ml
5 litres	100ml	50ml	50ml
25 litres	500ml	250ml	250ml

Stage 3: the remainder of the fruit production season:

Desired EC = approx. 3.0 mS/cm above the EC of make-up water

Make a solution using EQUAL QUANTITIES OF TOMATO A & TOMATO B with water as follows

Volume of diluted solution required	Amount of Tom A	Amount of Tom B	Amount of Tom C
1 litre	10ml	10ml	----
5 litres	50ml	50ml	----
25 litres	250ml	250ml	----