

## BELL COUNTY MASTER GARDENER

### Tip of the Week

By Beverly Wickersham

### “Giving Your Tomatoes a Head Start”

Home grown, vine-ripened tomatoes are a popular taste treat for Central Texas Gardeners. Tomatoes can be grown in containers or in the flower garden as long as full sun exposure is available. However, many gardeners reserve a special place in the garden for this popular “vegetable” which is actually a fruit.\*

Giving the tomatoes a head start in advance of the usual mid-March planting time will help assure healthy, crop-yielding plants. Many young tomato plant varieties are available in local garden stores now. These small plants can be readily transplanted from the original “6-pack” container into 4 to 6-inch pots.

1. Water the young tomatoes one or two days before placing them in the larger pots.
2. Mix ½ part potting soil with ½ part bagged top soil or top soil from your garden.
3. Place about 2 inches of the mixed soil in the bottom of the pot.
4. Remove tomatoes, one at a time, from the plastic six-pack. (Do not disturb the “ball” of soil surrounding the root system of the plant.)
5. For “leggy” plants, remove the lower leaves and then pull soil around the base of the plant. (Tomatoes are one of the few plants that can be planted deeper)
6. Gently firm up the soil around the plant.
7. The soil should be approximately ½ inch from the top edge of the pot.
8. Place the plants in a sunny spot in your home and water every 4 or 5 days.
9. In early March, when weather permits, place the plants outside in a partially sunny area to acclimate them for eventual transplant to the garden.
10. In mid-March, plant the tomatoes in the garden or in containers in full sun.

\*A “fruit” contains seeds (apples, oranges, tomatoes)

A “vegetable does not contain seeds (carrots, radishes, potatoes)

If you have questions for a Master Gardener, email [ask.bcmga@gmail.com](mailto:ask.bcmga@gmail.com)

