



GROWING TOMATILLO

Tomatillos are productive and tasty. Related to the tomato, these plants are easy to grow as transplants and very productive. The big cherry tomato sized fruits are enclosed by a papery husk and are of astonishing flavours. It's the combination of tomatoey and lime flavours that make them ideal for salsas and other Mexican and South American dishes.

Seed Sowing

Sow undercover in modules in February - April in a heated propagator or on a warm sunny windowsill (ideally in temperatures between 15-20 degrees).

Transplanting

Transplant your seedlings into their final growing position in May when the risk of frost has passed. Plant deeply, leaving 50cm between plants.

Tomatillo will benefit from being grown undercover in a polytunnel or greenhouse, but can be hardened off and grown outdoors in a well sheltered, south-facing spot. They are also suitable for container growing but make sure your pot is at least 5L in volume.

A minimum of two plants are required for effective pollination.

Plant Care

Keep the area weed-free and consistently watered during hot spells. You can mulch around the plants to keep in moisture and prevent weeds.

Tomatillos will benefit from some support to keep them from sprawling. The branches are fragile and break easily, particularly in strong winds.

Challenges

The most common pests are aphids, cutworms and slugs. Ensure proper spacing for good air circulation, and keep watering consistent, especially during hot weather.

Harvest

Harvest the fruits when they are between 3 and 5cm diameter and swell in the papery husks. They should roughly be the size of a small tomato.

They will keep well for up to three weeks in their husks in the fridge.

Culinary Ideas And Uses

Tomatillos are delicious raw in a salad with their completely unique flavour, both sour and sweet with a dry, crisp texture. They are the key ingredient for a mexican salsa, either raw or roasted and work excellently as a base for soup, pairing wonderfully with chicken, beans or pork.

Seed Saving

A population of at least five plants is recommended for seed saving.

Leave the fruits on the plant until the husks have gone brown. When harvesting the fruits, remove the husks and cut into wedges, placing into a food processor with extra water and blend to separate the seeds from the surrounding pulp. Once the seeds have settled the bottom of the container, the pulpy water can be poured off. The process of adding clean water and pouring off the pulpy water (known as 'water-winning') can be repeated until the seeds are clean. Pour into a strainer and rinse with water, placing on a screen to dry in a well ventilated, cool area.

Store seeds in a cool dark place.