



# Columbia Nursery

## Tips for Growing Tomatoes in NW Montana (Zones 3–5)

### 1. Heat Mats for Seed Starting

Tomatoes need 75–85°F to germinate. Use a heat mat when starting seeds indoors to ensure strong, uniform sprouts. Alternatively, purchase starts from a local nursery.

### 2. Season Extenders

Use Wall-o-Water, frost blankets, cloches, or cold frames to warm soil early and protect against late frosts. Crucial for Zone 3–5 gardeners with short, unpredictable growing seasons.

### 3. Sturdy Support Structures

Tomatoes need support from planting time onward. Use cages, trellises, or stakes to keep plants upright and fruit off the soil, reducing disease risk.

### 4. Deep Containers or Raised Beds

Choose 5+ gallon containers or raised beds to warm soil quickly and improve drainage. Great for mobility and frost protection.

### 5. Mulch & Consistent Watering

Apply straw or shredded leaves to retain soil moisture and suppress weeds. Water deeply and consistently—especially in containers—to prevent blossom end rot and fruit cracking.

### 6. Cold-Tolerant, Early-Maturing Varieties

Prioritize varieties like Early Girl, Fantastico, Stupice, and Sun Gold. Combine determinate types (for bulk harvest) and indeterminate types (for extended picking).

### 7. Fertilizing & Feeding Tips

At planting: use a balanced organic fertilizer (e.g., Espoma Tomato Tone) in the hole. Adding Espoma Bone Meal can help prevent blossom end rot by adding calcium & phosphorous. Feed again when flowering begins and every 2–3 weeks during fruiting. Avoid high-nitrogen fertilizers (which promote leaves over fruit). Supplement with compost tea or fish emulsion for a gentle nutrient boost mid-season.

## Product Recommendations

Bagged Soils	Bulk Soils	Composts
ProMix Organic Veggie*	4-Way	Dirt Rich
Happy Frog*		Land & Sea Organic*
		Compost & Manure



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		Organic Poultry Compost*
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\*Denotes safe for organic gardening.

Fertilizers	Troubleshooting	Treats
Espoma Organic Bio-tone Starter*	Ladybugs (aphid control)*	aphids
Espoma Garden Food 10-10-10	Bonide Rot Stop (blossom end rot)	calcium deficiencies, blossom end rot
Espoma Organic Garden Tone 3-4-4*	Natria Insect, Disease & Mite Control	disease, insects, mites
Jack's Tomato FeEd	Bonide Captain Jack's Copper Fungicide (fungicide)*	fungus
Espoma Tomato Tone	BioAdvanced Tomato & Vegetable Insect Killer	insects
Espoma Organic Bone Meal* 4-12-0	Bonide Captain Jack's Neem Max (insecticide)*	insects
	Bonide Captain Jack's Tomato & Vegetable (insecticide)	insects
	Natria Insecticidal Soap*	insects
	BioAdvanced Fruit Citrus & vegetable Insect Control	insects
	Natria Tomato, Vegetable & Fruit Insect Control*	insects
	BioAdvanced Fruit & Vegetable 3 in 1 Solution (fungus, insects & Mites)	insects & fungus
	Natria Neem Oil (insecticide)*	insects, powdery mildew
	Bonide Tomato & Blossom Set Spray (promote blossom set & fruit development)	promotes blossom & fruit development
	Bonide Captain Jack's Bt (worms & caterpillars)*	worms & caterpillars
	Bonide Thuricide	worms & caterpillars