

# 2017 Heirloom Tomato Plants at Topmost Herb Farm

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The greenhouse is open for sales from 9am to 5pm on Thursday, Friday and Saturdays, beginning Saturday, May 13, 2017 – always the Saturday before Mothers Day

With the addition of ground cherries and tomatillos, another Birch Mountain beauty, and one different yellow tomato, this year's list closely resembles last year's sellout, and the price still remains \$4.75 each.

Seeds are saved by friends or us, but most are ordered from reputable growers who are GMO-free and the majority are organic. We germinate them here in the greenhouse and transplant later into quart pots. We use organic potting mix exclusively. You too can save seed from these plants and be assured of growing an exact duplicate of that plant the following year.

As many varieties sell out quickly we are happy to set aside plants for you. It's easy - list your choices on an email to [carole@topmostherbfarm.com](mailto:carole@topmostherbfarm.com) and pay when you pick up your order – mid June at the latest. We accept checks or cash but not plastic.

## Red and Pink Slicers

### **Birch Mountain**

This tomato belongs to Connecticut! It is rapidly becoming a favorite, thanks to the efforts of generations of hard-working Italian farmers who live on Birch Mountain in Bolton. Among many others, the names Fiano, Soma, Morra and Albasi are familiar to many, but Topmost owes credit to Ray Soma, who obtained the seeds from Bob Morra, who received seeds years ago from a cousin in Italy. These prolific plants produce meaty, blocky, delicious tomatoes in an abundance of fruits that serve equally well as fresh slicers or cooked in sauce. Taste some history! Try a Fiano da Avellino also (in the Paste Tomato group).

### **Box Car Willie**

A mid-season prolific producer of smooth, large, beautiful fruits with marvelous taste. Initially bred in New Jersey and for some strange reason, named after the king of the hoboies.

### **Brandywine**

Flavor is the reason this Amish heirloom from the 19<sup>th</sup> century remains available. Large, rich tasting fruit is borne on vigorous vines and is often irregularly shaped. It is sometimes subject to catfacing, a physiological disorder of bands of dry, dark lesions on the shoulders which are harmless.

### **Cosmonaut Volkov**

This heirloom is an excellent Northeast variety from the Ukraine which has a sweet/tangy flavor and positively celestial taste that is always good, occasionally sublime. Being fairly early, expect heavy yields of large fruit. Named for Russian cosmonaut Vladislav Volkov, who perished on a return flight from Earth's first space station, by a Russian space engineer who was an avid gardener.

### **Costoluto Fiorentino**

From Florence Italy, these flattened and ribbed tomatoes have a concentrated flavor, making them suitable both for sauce and fresh slicing. Robust plants produce fruits with outstanding taste.

### **Ligurian Oxheart**

This heart-shaped Italian tomato is revered by Italian farmers in the region of Liguria. It was awarded the designation "Heart of an Ox" in appreciation of its massive fruits, smooth skin and marvelous taste.

### **Mortgage Lifter**

One of the best heirloom stories ever! Charlie Byles operated a garage in West Virginia in the 1930s and was famous for repairing radiators, but also well known for his passionate dedication to growing and breeding great tomato plants. He sold them to customers for \$1 each, and paid off his mortgage in a few short years. This stunning tomato usually weighs in at over 1 pound, with delicious bright red flesh.

### **Prudens Purple**

A great sandwich tomato, with its pink skin, red flesh and silky texture. These one-pound fruits have irregular shapes and few seeds. Dating back to the 19<sup>th</sup> century, this is the kind of tomato of which legends are made.

### **Rutgers**

Developed in 1928 by Rutgers University for the Campbell Soup Company, this plant is a heavy producer of medium sized all-purpose fruit, juicy with marvelous old-fashioned flavor. It was introduced to the public in 1934; however, by the 1970s farmers had moved on to tougher tomatoes with shipping hardiness and less flavor, and Rutgers was lost. With a rise in awareness and demand for heirlooms, many folks remembered Rutgers and seed was located and reintroduced.

### **Thessaloniki**

A Greek transplant introduced here in the 1950s. Very productive plants with good disease resistance yield medium sized fruits with outstanding flavor. Useful both in salads and sauces.

## **Paste Tomatoes**

### **Amish Paste**

Some years ago, at a Coventry Regional Farmers' Market tomato tasting, this was the winner of the taste test, proving its versatility as both a sauce ingredient and a fresh slicer. Bright red and meaty, the delicious fruits average a half pound.

### **Anna Russian**

Quantities of heart-shaped fruit abound on these robust, hardy plants. Early and luscious, they are superb both for cooking and eating fresh. From Russia to Oregon to us.

### **Opalka**

This Polish heirloom was brought to New York around 1900 by the Opalka family. The fruits are large, with few seeds, mellow and full-bodied. The sturdy plants produce abundantly.

### **Fiano da Avellino**

Another winner from Birch Mountain in Bolton, thanks to Tony Fiano! This tomato originated in South Central Italy. Its fat, beefy fruit is not only excellent for sauce but delicious in a sandwich.

### **San Marzano**

Many chefs consider this their favorite paste tomato. It was already an heirloom in its native Italy, believed to have arrived in 1770 as a gift from the Viceroy of Peru to the kingdom of Naples. It was planted in the volcanic soil in the shadow of Mount Vesuvius and years later was assured of a premier place in Italian canneries. The flesh is thick, with few seeds and the strong taste is sweet.

### **Striped Roman**

These beautiful plants produce unique, long-pointed stunning fruit with wavy orange stripes. The perfect midsize tomatoes possess fabulous flavor both for cooking and slicing.

# Yellow, Green, Purple and the Rest of the Rainbow

## Big Rainbow

This lovely heirloom was preserved through the efforts of Seed Savers Exchange. A rainbow when ripening, with green on the shoulders, yellow in the middle and red on the blossom end. Huge fruits weigh up to 2 pounds. Delicious and sweet, when sliced their flesh is yellow with neon red streaks.

## Black Krim

Don't wait too long to harvest this delicate Russian tomato. They are dead ripe and delicious when half green and still firm. The strikingly iridescent purple skin with dark green/black shoulders, often has some catfacing. The meaty flesh is dark and unusually juicy. It has been described as having a smoky flavor like a good single malt Scotch.

## Cherokee Purple

This unusual variety comes from Tennessee, originating with the Cherokee Indians and dates back to 1890. Slightly oblate fruits average 10-13 oz. and sunburn easily, so prune the plants sparingly. Dusky brownish/purple skin, dark green shoulders and brick red flesh. Rich taste, often referred to as sweet, rich, juicy and winey.

## Dr. Wyche's Yellow

Introduced to Seed Savers Exchange by the late Dr. John Wyche, owner of the Cole Brothers Circus, who fertilized his tomato plants with elephant manure. The glowing tangerine/orange fruits average 1 pound, and have a smooth texture and tropical sweet taste.

## Goldie

The electric Kool Aid, Low Acid Tomato! This large, full-flavored orange tomato is a favorite for eating fresh. It is stupendously rich and possesses a velvety texture. It dates back to the 1870s.

## Green Zebra

A most unusual beast in the tomato menagerie! Their exquisite taste is mild, tart/sweet, with a hint of lemon. Don't wait too long to harvest them, as they are ready to eat when they are still firm. Yellow/green skin with dark green vertical stripes and emerald green flesh.

## Japanese Black Trifele

This incredible petite fruit, shaped like a little pear, hardly looks like a tomato, at only 4 to 6 ounces, with its dusky burgundy skin and green shoulders. With its superb taste, it commands a high price in the high end markets in the Russian Republic today. Delightful in a mixed salad with other heirlooms.

## Paul Robeson

This Russian heirloom has that distinctive, sweet, smoky taste with a tang and is quite an extraordinary tomato named after an extraordinary man. Slices of the 6 to 12 oz. black/brick fruits with green shoulders make a memorable sandwich. Paul Robeson was a talented athlete, scholar, singer, actor, linguist and crusader for American racial equality and social justice. He befriended the Soviet Union and was harassed and blacklisted during the 20<sup>th</sup> century McCarthy era.

## **Pineapple**

A most beautiful tomato, often weighing 2 pounds or more. A Kentucky native with a uniquely mild, low acid fruity sweetness, its striped skin reveals flesh with yellow and red marbling.

## **Yellow Brandywine**

In extreme weather fluctuations irregularly-shaped fruits often occur. Large, slightly ribbed 1 lb. fruits with the identifiable Brandywine ring scar at the blossom end possess a smooth creamy texture with a rich, complex and tangy flavor.

# **Cherry Tomatoes**

## **Black Cherry**

These dusky, perfectly round one-inch fruits are incomparably sweet, juicy and delicious.

## **Gardener's Delight**

From Germany, these bright red, bite-size, extra sweet fruits are full of flavor and produce many clusters containing 6 to 12 fruits all summer long. Their taste is so marvelous that one tends to overlook their tendency to crack.

## **Principe Borghese**

Larger than most cherries, these plum shaped, ruby red beauties dry beautifully, retain their flavor and are excellent for thickening sauce. Delicious fresh, their flavor is rich and deep with few seeds and little juice.

## **Red Zebra**

It's impossible to resist the unmatched taste of these clusters of small fruits growing on vines often reaching 6 feet. Their bright scarlet skin is streaked with orange, gold and yellow and often a random streak of green.

## **Sun Gold**

Here's the ringer of the list, since she's a hybrid. She's included here because of her intense flavor and she has a legion of admirers. The small fruits, borne in prolific clusters, ripen to a rich apricot color, and they are incredibly sweet. They are a local treat, since their tendency to split precludes shipping.

## **Tiger Tom**

This tiger is orange with red stripes. He's early and rather large, with an incredible taste that is never bland.

## **A few Tomato Tips from Craig LeHoulier in "Epic Tomatoes"**

**Avoid storing tomatoes in the refrigerator. It's too cold and will adversely affect the flavor.**

All tomatoes have equivalent acidity but vastly varying sugar levels.

For Sweetness: Anna Russian, Big Rainbow

For Big Flavor: Brandywine, Cherokee Purple

Black Cherry is a Cherokee Purple taste-alike. Incredible flavor!

Fully ripe tomatoes have a little "give" when squeezed. Picking often and early increases yield.

# Husk Tomatoes (Ground Cherries & Tomatillos)

Tomatillos: *Physalis ixocarpa*

Ground Cherries: *Physalis pruinosa*

Husk tomatoes have light-brown, papery husks (calyxes) that enlarge and cover the maturing fruits. The 2 most common cultivated species are the ground cherry and the tomatillo. Both have been cultivated in Central and South America for centuries, even before tomatoes. Ground cherries are so named because the cherry-sized fruits are borne near the ground. The leaves of ground cherries are hairy or fuzzy and the plants grow 1-2 ft. tall with lateral spreading growth. Tomatillos are larger-fruited, typically 1-3 in. diameter, and the plants grow 2-5 ft. tall with smooth leaves. They all self-sow readily.

Ground cherries need no support, but tomatillos are best caged or trellised. Plant 2-3 feet apart.

Harvest: Husk tomatoes usually do not ripen fully until after falling from the plant. Larger tomatillos need to get pulled from the plants.

Ground cherries are eaten fresh, or are used in desserts, sauces, preserves, fruit toppings, pies and salads.

Tomatillos are usually cooked to bring out full flavor: Simmer for 5-10 minutes in a pot of water, then use in chili rellenos, salsa verde, guacamole, or other sauces or dips.

## **Aunt Molly's Ground Cherry**

Small fruits with sweet and zesty flavor.

## **Tomatillo Rio Grande Verde**

Large apple-green fruit.

## **Tomatillo Verde**

Standard richly flavored type.