Short-Season Tomato Guide

Growing tomatoes in Colorado can be a bit challenging due to the high altitude, intense sun, short growing season, and unpredictable weather. Short-season tomato varieties are ideal for our shorter growing season. These tomatoes typically mature in 50-70 days from transplanting, making them perfect for regions with late frosts and early cold snaps.

Best Short-Season Tomato Varieties:

Cherry & Grape Tomatoes (Fastest to Ripen)

- Sun Gold (57-65 days) Sweet, golden-orange cherry tomatoes.
- Sweet 100 (65-70 days) Prolific producer and sugary flavor.
- Yellow Pear (65-75 days) Unique heirloom variety of tomatoes with a sweet-tart flavor.
- Sweet Pea Currant (60-65 days) Tiny fruit resembling currants that are very sweet. Heirloom variety.
- Tommy Toe (60-70 days) Heirloom cherry. Originally from the Ozark Mountains.
- Indigo Cherry (65-70 days) Dark blue or black-purple skin with red flesh.

Early Slicing Tomatoes

- Early Girl (50-60 days) Classic red slicer, very reliable.
- Fourth of July (49-54 days) One of the earliest ripening varieties.
- Stupice (55-60 days) Cold-hardy, sweet-flavored Czech heirloom.
- Siberian (48-60 days) Cold tolerant. Can set fruit at temperatures as low as 38 degrees. An heirloom from Siberia.
- Celebrity (70-75 days) Medium sized. Disease resistant.
- Moskovich (50-65) Thrives in cool, short-seasoned climates. 4-6oz fruit. Heirloom.

Best for Sauces & Paste

- Roma VF (60-65 days) Compact, disease-resistant, great for canning.
- San Marzano (70-75 days) Larger, meaty paste tomato.

Compact & Container-Friendly Varieties

- Glacier (55-65 days) Tolerates cool weather and produces all season. Compact heirloom.
- Bush Early Girl (54-60 days) Compact plant with full-sized fruit.
- Silvery Fir Tree (57-60 days) Dwarf variety. Originally from Russia. Fern-like foliage. 2" fruit. Heirloom.
- Oregon Spring (65-70 days) Performs well in cool weather. Ideal for containers. Medium fruit. Heirloom.
- Mountain Princess (68 -70 days) Very productive and early. Can be grown in a container. Fast growing. Heirloom.
- Red Robin (55-60 days) Dwarf variety. Self-pollinating. Heirloom.

More Tips for Growing Tomatoes in Colorado:

- Start seeds indoors 6-8 weeks before the last frost (around mid to late March for most areas).

- Transplant outdoors only after nighttime temperatures stay consistently above 50°F (often mid to late May, or even early June in higher elevations).
- Harden off seedlings by gradually exposing them to outdoor conditions for 7-10 days before transplanting.
- Choose a sunny location with at least 6-8 hours of direct sunlight per day.
- Fertilize: Use a balanced fertilizer at planting. Once flowers appear, switch to a fertilizer higher in phosphorus to encourage fruiting. Avoid excessive nitrogen, which promotes leafy growth at the expense of fruit.
- Frost Protection: Use wall-o-water, row covers, or cloches to shield plants from late spring and early fall frosts.
- Wind Protection: Strong winds are common in Colorado, so consider using stakes, cages, or planting near windbreaks.
- Hail Protection: A lightweight fabric like Frost Cloth or wire hoops with mesh can protect plants from hailstorms.
- Extending the Season: If an early frost threatens in fall, cover plants with blankets or row covers at night. Pick green tomatoes before a freeze and let them ripen indoors.

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