

Tomatillo Toma Verde

Physalis ixocarpa

Family: Solanaceae (Nightshade family) includes foxglove, nicotiana, petunia, Chinese lantern, eggplant, pepper, tomato.

Native: Unknown.

General Tomatillo Information: Also called husk tomatoes. Related to tomato. Tomatillo grows inside a thin papery shell. Indeterminate - continues to produce until hard fall frost. Plants grow 3'-6' tall.

Hardiness: Grown as annual.

Variety Information: Toma Verde tomatillo is adapted to grow in a wider range of climates than most tomatillos. Toma Verde also has large fruits for a tomatillo, weighing in from 2-3 ounces.

When to Plant: OUTSIDE: Spring, 2 weeks after last frost and when soil temperatures are warm. START INSIDE: 4 weeks before last frost.

Optimal Growing Conditions: GENERAL: With a couple of exceptions, tomatillos grow in climatic conditions somewhat similar to tomatoes. The first exception is heat: when tomatoes begin to suffer from the intense summer heat in the southern climates, tomatillos thrive. Tomatillos also seem to take light fall frosts better than tomatoes - the fruit is protected by a papery sheath and doesn't suffer frost damage as easily as an unprotected tomato. If planted about the same time as tomatoes, tomatillos will usually

produce a crop about the same time or earlier than most tomatoes. Give tomatillos lots of space; the warmer the climate, the bigger they get. **SOIL:** Average garden soil. If excessively sandy or clayey, add sufficient amounts of organic material. **WATER:** Tomatillos are quite drought tolerant and will withstand all but the worst drought. **EXPOSURE:** Full sun. **FERTILIZER:** Work 15 pounds of 5-10-10 into 100 square feet of soil before planting.

Harvesting - How & when: Fruits should be harvested when they almost fill the husk but are still green in color. Fruit at the bottom of the plant ripens first. If left on the vine too long and allowed to turn yellow or blue, they lose their unique flavor.

Salsa Fria: Combine the following ingredients and chill thoroughly. 2 cups chopped very ripe tomatoes, 1 onion finely chopped, 1-4 ounce can chopped green chilies, 1 tablespoon chopped cilantro, 1 tablespoon oregano, 2 tablespoons wine vinegar, 1 tablespoon olive oil, 1 pound chopped tomatillos (hulls removed, of course), salt & pepper to taste, cilantro sprigs as a garnish. Note: There are so many good salsa recipes available today, try several! **Kitchen Notes:** > Store fruits in husks. > Can be refrigerated up to 1 week in open container.

HOW TO START SEEDS INDOORS

Several critical factors to remember when starting seed indoors:

LIGHT: A window or normal household light is not adequate light for starting seedlings indoors. Fluorescent tubes work the best. Use at least a double tube setup with one tube being a cool-white and one tube being a warm-white. Tubes should be no more than 3" away from the seedlings. Seedlings should receive 16 hours of light (a dark period is important, so don't leave lights on for 24 hours, use an automatic timer). **MOISTURE:** Seedlings must be kept moist (not soggy) at all times.

TEMPERATURE: Normal household temperature (70 - 80 degrees) is ideal for germination; 60 - 70 degrees will work just fine. A 10 degree drop in temperature at night is also preferable.

SOIL: Your local independent garden center will carry special sterilized soils for seed starting.

HARDENING OFF: When your plants are ready to go outside, start slowly! Put them outside for a few hours everyday; slowly increase the time outdoors daily. In a week to ten days, they will be ready for outdoors.




Date Seed
Planted:

(Write in date)

Days to Maturity: 65

Artist: Donna Clement of Longmont, Colorado is a graduate of the School of Visual Arts, NYC. Her work includes set design, scenic art, murals, paintings, and graphic arts. Donna is an advanced master gardener. Hobbies include scuba, motorcycling, and Star Trek. "Live Long and Prosper!"

Your last day of frost...

 The last day of frost (32 degrees or less) is defined as "the first day in spring on which there is less than a 50% chance a frost will occur." This information is crucial when planting a garden. To find out your last day of frost, call your local independent garden center or your **COUNTY** Cooperative Agricultural Extension Service. Also inquire about the average date of the first fall frost.