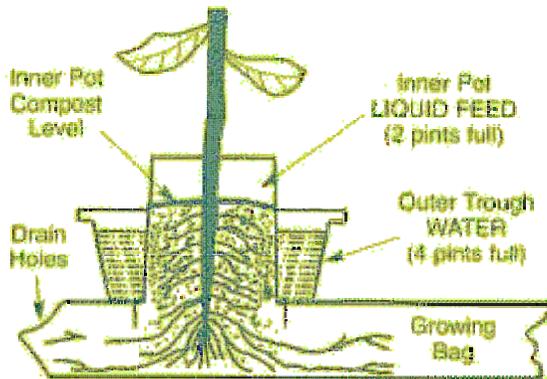


GROWBAG POT

The Tomato Grower's Secret Weapon



A very popular way of growing tomatoes is by using growing bags with three plants to a bag although two plants per bag will give a higher yield. However, growing bags are not very easy to water and so the Growbag Pot, which has been designed and developed for use with all types of grow bags, is an ideal solution.

In preparation for using the Growbag Pot:

- All compacted material should be loosened by shaking the bag and this will also ensure good root penetration as well as easy Growbag Pot application.
- The bag should be placed on a flat clean surface with the drain holes pierced through and on the top half of the bag and the pots spaced LIGHTLY on the bag at equidistant intervals before lightly pressing down and piercing the bag with the Growbag Pot. (Twist the pot in either direction so that the teeth cut through the plastic.)

- Once seated, remove the cut plastic circle and place good quality planting compost into the inner pot and fill till level with the top of the rim of the outer trough. (Planting compost should be matched to that of the growing bag – coir to coir, peat to peat.)
- It is at this stage that support strings or canes should be sited and the loose ends of the strings are left hanging in the pot.
- Hollow out the centre of the compost and place the tomato plant in the hollow, tucking the loose end of the string under the rootball. Firm the compost around, leaving the other end free to tension as needed. (The string can also be tied loosely around the bottom of the stem and as the plant grows wound gently around the plant to give support.)
- Water the plant in the inner pot to establish (approx 1 pint).
- Fill the outer trough to the top with water (4 pints) and leave to slowly saturate the growbag. This gives you a visual benefit of knowing an accurate quantity of water has entered the bag to supply the plant.
- No more water should be applied for the first two weeks to the outer trough and this will ensure a strong healthy root system.
- For the next 3 to 4 weeks watering should be done in the morning and a maximum of 2 pints should be placed in the outer trough every 2 to 3 days. The inner pot should be watered once a week to ensure it does not dry out.
- As the tomato plant grows, it sends down secondary roots into the growing bag and after 4 to 6 weeks it is necessary to increase the amount of water in the outer trough. (This can be checked by the amount of excess water seeping out of the drain holes.)
- Any suitable liquid feed can be used and the relevant instructions for that feed should be followed. Feed should be applied to the inner pot which will take approx. 2 pints of liquid (sufficient for one week).
- Should any nutrient roots appear on the surface of the inner pot, these can be covered lightly with compost to keep moisture in.

- Feeding should continue throughout the season and at the end of the season the pot can be twisted and lifted from the growbag, the rootball and compost discarded and the Growbag Pot washed and stored for future use next season.

Tomatoes should be grown as tall, single stem plants or cordons as this makes the best use of your greenhouse by filling empty roof space. The plants can be trained by removing the side shoots (pinching out) when they are less than 5 cm (2") long. It must be remembered that bush varieties cannot be trained as cordons as they have a completely different growth pattern. These need rather to be placed in patio containers or into the vegetable plot where they can spread and take up a lot of horizontal space.

Cordon tomatoes need support and a good means of support is to attach a string to the greenhouse glazing bar above each plant and tie the other end loosely around the stem towards the bottom of the plant. As the plant grows, twist the top around the string

When the first flowers open, give each plant a daily shake to get the pollen moving and once the first tomatoes have "set" (about the size of a pea) it is essential to give regular feeding. Keep an eye on the new growth at the top of the plant; if it is green and vigorous then enough feeding is being done, but if it is pale and weak, the amount or frequency of feeding should be increased.

As the plant grows, the bottom leaves become shaded and they may curl or yellow. These should be snapped off with an upward movement as removal improves the flow of air around the plant. Never remove too many leaves and leave all healthy looking leaves intact.

When 4 or 5 trusses (bunches) have set, it is common practice to break the top off the plant (stopping). If you live in the colder part of

the country, plants should be stopped above the 5th truss because the season is too short to ripen more. Stopping is unnecessary in warmer areas and most plants will produce up to 12 trusses. If your plants have reached the greenhouse roof they can be trained horizontally.

Tomatoes in a cold greenhouse are often slow to ripen and the ripening process can be triggered by the placement of an over-ripe banana on to a bottom truss. Another tip when planting tomatoes into their final position is to push a single clove of garlic into the soil about 7½ cm (3") away from the stem just leaving the tip showing. The garlic will grow but does not develop further and the tomato has a better flavour and is far less likely to suffer insect damage.

Fruit should be picked when ripe and fully coloured. Hold the tomato in the palm of your hand and using your thumb break off the fruit at the knuckle on the flower stalk. Never leave fruit on the plant after it is fully ripened as flavour declines with age. Picking should be finished by late September to mid-October dependant on locality and season. Any fruit that is not ripe should be placed as a layer on a tray and put into a drawer with a couple of ripe apples to generate the fruit ripening process by releasing ethylene gas. Green tomatoes or semi ripe tomatoes can be used to make delicious chutneys.