



Gardener's Notebook

Volume 35, No. 1

News & Advice for Bay Area Gardeners

Early Spring 2021

Join us for a
Tomato Planting
webinar this spring.
Visit sloatgardens.com
for details.

**Grow your
own groceries**
fresh & organic

Thinking about growing your own tomatoes this spring? The answer is simple...**YES!** These sweet, juicy fruits are on our "absolutely must-grow" list for March, April, and May because fresh off the vine tomatoes are a true delight.

Whether you need soil, fertilizer, tomato cages, containers, or organically grown tomato starts, drop by Sloat Garden Center for all the ingredients to grow the perfect tomato... plus tips and growing advice! *Discover our popular tomato recipes at sloatgardens.com.*

In this issue: Vegetable planting chart • Growing tomatoes • Spring flowers • Indoor plants • Sloat soils

Six delicious tomatoes worth planting this spring

We've selected six of our favorite, locally grown cherry and slicer tomato varieties that will thrive in Marin County, San Francisco and the East Bay. From cool and foggy San Francisco, to warm and dry Danville, these beauties will succeed in our Bay Area climate.



Early Girl: A bright-red, early and dependable hybrid - one of the first to harvest. Bears flavorful fruit through summer.



Black Krim: This beautiful Russian heirloom is a violet-red, juicy tomato with a smoky flavor. Divine



Sweet 100: Loaded with red, sugary-sweet cherry tomatoes. True to its name. Produces tons of tomatoes!



Celebrity: An all-purpose tomato with lovely flavor, disease resistance and excellent yield.



Sungold: Produces abundant orange, candy-sweet, cherry tomatoes with high levels of vitamin A. So flavorful!



*** Brandywine:** This scarlet heirloom craves heat and is one of the best-tasting tomatoes. Produces large, sugary fruit!

How to Grow Tomatoes

1. Once the warm weather is consistent, start your tomato growing adventures by choosing varieties that work best in your particular micro-climate. Sloat Garden Center offers a fabulous selection of certified organic tomato and vegetable starts from local growers like Upstarts, Sweetwater, and Flatlands. These organic vegetable plants are already adapted to our Bay Area climate.
2. Tomatoes can be grown in beds, barrels or tubs planted in *Sloat Organic Potting Soil*. They'll do fine grown in containers, as long as they have enough room. Further enrich the soil by planting with *E.B. Stone Organics Sure Start*.
3. When growing tomatoes in the ground, use soil that's high in organic matter. If your soil is heavy clay or sandy, dig in *Sloat Loam Builder* or *Sloat Forest Mulch Plus*.
4. At planting time: Plant deeply so that the first set of leaves are just above the soil level. Roots will form on the buried stem, creating a larger and stronger root system. (If you've chosen a grafted tomato, they need to be planted at the soil line). Then, stake or cage tomato plants and guide new growth to maximize production. Include companion plants like Nasturtium, Alyssum, Zinnias, and Marigold so beneficial bugs will have plenty of food sources to do their important work!
5. Tomatoes need full sun (8 hours plus) and grow best with infrequent but deep watering. Younger plants will need more water as they develop their root systems. Feed with *E.B. Stone Organics Tomato & Vegetable Food*.



Shopping List

to grow the perfect tomato

- Soil: Use *Sloat Loam Builder* for garden beds, *Sloat Organic Potting Soil* for containers.
- Get plants started with *E.B. Stone Organics Sure Start*.
- Tomato plants – choose a combination of slicers and cherry tomatoes.
- Tomato cages.
- Marigold and Nasturtium plants (to repel insects and attract pollinators).
- Feed throughout the season with *E.B. Stone Organics Tomato & Vegetable Food*.



What does that tomato term mean?

Heirloom Tomato varieties connect us with our gardening past. They survived because their open-pollinated seeds were saved and passed down through generations of gardeners. Though prized for their flavor, heirlooms weren't a viable option for commercial production, so cultivation became dependent on home gardeners.



Open Pollination occurs when the plant is pollinated by insects, birds, wind, humans, or other natural mechanisms. An heirloom variety must be open-pollinated, but not all open-pollinated plants are heirlooms.

Determinate or bush tomatoes, are compact plants. They set fruit once at about the same time and then stop. Pruning is necessary. Determinate tomatoes can be grown in a barrel or tub because they don't need staking.

Indeterminate tomatoes have sprawling vines and keep growing unless stopped by frost and disease. These must be staked or caged.



Stake your plants

Your vegetable plants need support as they grow. Stake peppers, eggplants, peas, and beans in our smaller, 33" cages. Stake larger plants like tomatoes, squash, and cucumbers using our 54" heavy gauge wire cages. Our cages are made in the U.S. with American steel.

Easy organic solutions

What is powdery mildew and how can it be prevented?

This powdery white fungus can be challenging for gardeners. It can sometimes show up on melons, cucumbers, and tomatoes if plants are spaced too closely together without enough air circulation between them. We have a few tricks to prevent powdery mildew:

1. Prune or stake plants for best circulation.
2. Mulch your plants! Fungal spores are less likely to mature and then splash back up on the plant when they land in bark (as opposed to soil).
3. Prevent and treat powdery mildew with Bonide Neem oil.

Bonide Neem Oil prevents powdery mildew by covering the plant's leaves with oil. It's an organic, all-purpose insecticide, miticide, and fungicide for organic gardening. Derived from the Neem seed, use it safely on most edible and ornamental plants. *Note: the best time to spray is late afternoon to protect beneficial insects and prevent leaf scorch.*



April & May Gardening Webinars

Each season our skilled team members and local gardening professionals teach webinars in our popular gardening education series. Webinars are free to attend!

- Growing Tomatoes 101** (April 10)
- Identifying Beneficial Insects** (April 17)
- Attracting Native Pollinators** (April 24)
- Eco-friendly Pest & Disease Management** (May 1)
- Growing Peppers 101** (May 15)
- Growing Succulents 101** (May 22)
- How to Grow Berries** (May 29)

See sloatgardens.com for full details, times and locations to join our scheduled Zoom Webinars

Earthbox planters



Earth Box planters are a maintenance-free growing system that controls soil conditions, eliminates guesswork and more than doubles your garden's yield. They are extremely popular for growing your own food and we've stocked up on them for spring. We recommend planting with Sloat Organic Potting Soil.

Spring Vegetable Planting Timeline

Cool weather vegetables are most successful if matured when temps are mild and cool. If temperatures are very warm or hot, they'll become bitter and possibly "bolt" (go to seed) rather than produce edible parts. Plant in early spring to harvest before the summer heat. Plant a second crop in late summer.

	March	April	May	June
beets	●	●	●	●
broccoli	●	●		
Brussels sprouts			●	●
cabbage	●	●		
carrots	●	●		
cauliflower	●	●		
celery	●	●		
chard & kale	●	●	●	●
kohlrabi	●	●		
lettuce	●	●	●	●
onions	●			
parsnips		●	●	
peas	●	●		
potatoes	●	●	●	●
radishes	●	●	●	●
rutabega	●			
spinach	●	●		
turnips	●			

Warm weather vegetables want both warm soil and very warm temperatures. These plants are killed by frost and must be planted after the last frost date in your area. We use St. Patrick's Day, March 17th, as a "safe" date. If planted any earlier, you may need some protection from late season frost.

	March	April	May	June
beans		●	●	●
corn		●	●	●
cucumber		●	●	●
eggplant		●	●	●
melon*			●	●
peppers*			●	●
pumpkins			●	●
squash, summer		●	●	●
squash, winter			●	●
tomatoes		●	●	●
watermelon*			●	●

Learn how to grow a bounty of produce this spring (including tomatoes!) with our 47 Kitchen Gardener planting guides: www.sloatgardens.com.
Come in to Sloat Garden Center for the best fruits, vegetables, and herbs to plant in your Bay Area microclimate.

* Successful if grown in the warmest parts of the Bay Area

Grow Your Own

The Environmental Working Group keeps a "Dirty Dozen" list of fruits and vegetables that contain the highest level of residual pesticides found in purchased produce. The list includes strawberries, spinach, kale, nectarines, apples, grapes, peaches, cherries, pears, tomatoes, celery, potatoes and peppers. If you're concerned about pesticides in your food, we have a solid solution: Grow your own organic groceries!



View our Food Gardening Guides

Kitchen garden ideas: Plant up a good bug tub



Verbena



Achillea



Lantana



Coreopsis



Alyssum



Cosmos



Lavender



Sunflower



Erigeron

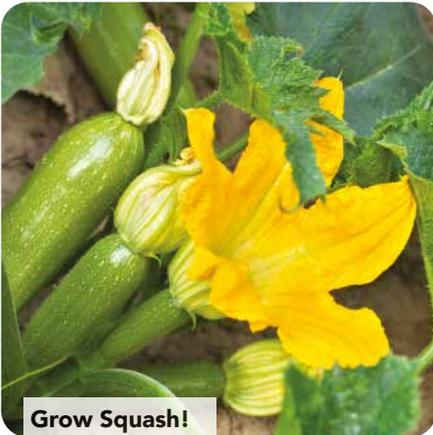


Marigold

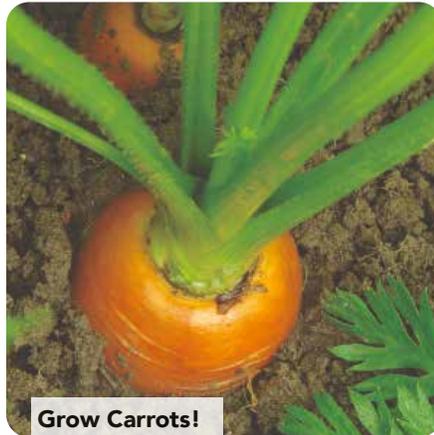
Even in a small kitchen garden, planting up a container of herbs and flowers to appeal to beneficial insects will help keep pests under control and plants healthier. This is biological pest control at its best!

Make your own **Good Bug Tub** with plants that attract, feed, and shelter beneficial insects: Verbena, Achillea, Lantana, Coreopsis, Alyssum, Cosmos, Lavender, Sunflower (available as seeds), Erigeron, and Marigold.

Plant now for summer harvest: squash, carrots, and beans



Squashes are vining plants that continuously bear fruit at harvest time. Their vines are large so they need ample growing space, but a large container (such as a wine barrel) can work also. Train small fruiting varieties on a trellis or cage. Squash should be planted now for warm weather harvest and picked when immature. Pattypan, yellow crookneck, zucchini or Italian squash are favorite varieties that grow well in our Bay Area climate.



Crunchy and nutritious carrots supply more than the recommended dietary allowance of vitamin A. They also contain Vitamins B, C, D, E & K. Our local growers grow them in a rainbow of colors and sizes. Carrots need deep, sandy loam to produce long roots. We use *Sloat Loam Builder* mixed in the soil. We also use *E.B. Stone All Purpose Organic (5-5-5)* fertilizer and *Kelp Help* at planting time so they have enough necessary potassium.



Beans hold a strong place in culinary traditions and trends. Green beans (aka string beans or snap beans) are the most widely planted bean type. Their tender flesh pod may be green, yellow, or purple (which turn green when cooked). Plants grow as self-supporting bushes (bush beans) or as climbing vines (pole beans), but both would benefit from caging or staking. Bush plants bear fruit earlier, but climbing vines are more productive. Most beans are easy to grow from seed.



See specific vegetable growing instructions in our food growing guides at sloatgardens.com

Fresh, homegrown food starts with healthy soil



Invest in quality, locally crafted soil!

Use *Sloat Organic Planting Mix*, our special blend for Bay Area gardens, to help conserve soil moisture, loosen hard soil, and improve soil porosity for better drainage. Mix in the ground with native soil. Excellent for planting all types of ornamentals, flowers, trees, and shrubs. Not for container use.

Plant herb and vegetable beds with *Sloat Organic Loam Builder*. This loamy blend enhances the bacterial action in soil and improves soil fertility for vegetables and flowers. Mix 50/50 with native or raised bed soil.

Enrich soil at planting time by adding *E.B. Stone Organics Sure Start* to encourage expansive root systems, increased crop yields, and delicious produce. Locally made in Suisun and sustainably produced.

Create an Indoor Plant Sanctuary with Favorite Houseplants

Houseplants are a beam of light to brighten our days. In our homes, indoor plants boost moods, reduce stress, offer a sense of purpose, and are gratifying to watch grow.

We have our favorite, easy care, low-maintenance indoor plants in stock at all Sloat locations. To accompany your new plant friend, we also have a large selection of handmade pottery in a rainbow of colors, styles, and sizes. See you in the stores!



Learn to Care for Houseplants



Dracaena



Peperomia

Peperomia are a genus of low-growing, semi-succulent plants from central and south America. Their foliage is delicately marked with white or light green veins. They are available in a range of leaf shapes, and textures, plus cool colors and variegations.

Peperomias need medium to bright indirect light. Let them fully dry out before watering again, and be careful not to water too often.

Indoor Potting soil

Mixed specifically for indoor use, our *Indoor Potting Soil* provides excellent aeration, drainage, and water retention to help indoor plants thrive. Sloat Indoor Potting Soil is ready-to-use, right out of the bag. Our soil is locally crafted and produced by E.B. Stone Organics.

Feed your Houseplants

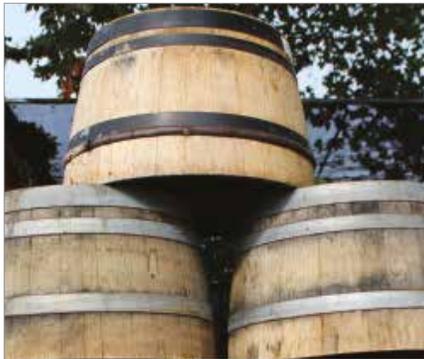
Tappin' Roots All Stages organic plant fertilizer keeps houseplants vigorous and strong. This formula also helps houseplants overcome failing health and neglect.



Our beautiful baskets and unique pots will hold your plants in style!



Lots of pots!



We carry a range of beautiful, handmade, outdoor pottery in many shapes and sizes to plant up anything you want to grow. Our barrels are deep and roomy with plenty of space for tomatoes, herbs, vegetables, flowers, and more.

A few moments in our Concord store



When you visit Sloat Garden Center in Concord you'll experience a plant nursery that takes its inspirational whimsy seriously. On-site is a barbecue planted with succulents, a storage chest with a Star Wars Millennium Falcon resting among the plants, and a large checker set with Echeveria playing pieces. Store manager Dustin explains it this way: "We're really about inspiring people, thinking out of the box, and having fun."

The Concord store is a colorful oasis filled with annuals, perennials, shrubs, trees, vegetables, and pottery, but the staff is key to what makes this store tick. Houseplant buyer Lori brings in a range of common and specialty houseplants, while Assistant Manager Susie sources unique vegetables and is in tune with what customers are looking for ("there are lots of gardeners who come a long way just to consult with Susie," explains Dustin). The entire staff make plant shopping a pleasure; their goal is to inspire gardeners and to motivate successes.

Spring at Sloat Garden Center

We're greeting spring with locally grown perennials, annuals, shrubs, trees, and vegetables. Stop by and see what we have in store for your garden.



Spanish Lavender



Grevillea



Coleonema



Euphorbia



Osteospermum



Nemesia



Azalea



Rhododendron



Leucadendron

Visit our stores: Twelve Locations in San Francisco, Marin and Contra Costa

San Francisco

327 3rd Ave between
Geary & Clement
(415) 752-1614

2700 Sloat Blvd.
46th & Sloat Blvd.
(415) 566-4415

3237 Pierce Street
Chestnut & Lombard
(415) 440-1000

Pierce: 9am-6:30pm

Novato

2000 Novato Blvd.
(415) 897-2169

Kentfield

700 Sir Francis Drake Bl.
(415) 454-0262

Mill Valley

657 E. Blithedale
(415) 388-0102

401 Miller Ave.
(415) 388-0365

Pleasant Hill

2895 Contra Costa Blvd.
(925) 939-9000

Martinez

6740 Alhambra Ave
(925) 935-9125

Concord

1555 Kirker Pass Rd.
(925) 681-0550

Danville

800 Camino Ramon (in the
Rose Garden Center)
(925) 837-9144

828 Diablo Road
at El Cerro
(925) 743-0288

M-Sat hours: 8am-6:30pm

Sun hours: 9am-5pm

Garden Design Department

401 Miller Ave.,
Mill Valley (415) 388-3754

Bulk Soils

828 Diablo Road at El Cerro
(925) 820-1273

(East Bay delivery only)

M-Sat hours: 8am-4pm

Visit us on the web: www.sloatgardens.com

S l o a t



420 Coloma Street
Sausalito, CA 94965-1428



We'll help you grow the plants you love!

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Open 7 days a week 8:30am to 6:30pm

(or as noted above)

Celebrate **Earth Day** on April 22nd!

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What to do in the garden March & April

Plant

It's vegetable planting time! Grow your own groceries with organic vegetable starts & seeds: lettuce, tomatoes, herbs, zucchini and peppers.

Plant your favorite spring annuals. Petunias, Alyssum, Marigolds, Cosmos and Lobelia.



Fertilize

Stock up on top quality, plant-specific fertilizers: we recommend **E.B. Stone Organics Rose & Flower, Tomato & Vegetable** and **Citrus & Fruit** foods. Use **E.B. Stone Organics Sure Start** for all new plantings to establish them quickly.

Prune/Maintain

WaterWise tip: For new plantings, use water-holding polymer **Soil Moist**. The non-toxic granules hold water longer than soil alone; minimizing moisture loss to evaporation.



Water early in the morning to prevent wet foliage overnight. Wet foliage attracts snails and fungal diseases. Non-toxic **Sluggo** helps keep slugs and snails under control.

Stop aphids early with **Neem Oil**, or **Monterey Take Down Spray**. Spray at day's end after bees have stopped foraging.

Release ladybugs, praying mantis, and other beneficial insects to help control aphids, mites, whiteflies, and other garden pests.

Use **Forest Mulch Plus** as a top dressing on established and new plantings to reduce moisture loss and keep roots cool while inhibiting weed seed germination.



Spring is the best time to repot houseplants and give them a feeding. Use **Tappin' Roots** to keep houseplants healthy.

See our full guide at sloatgardens.com



Join our **FREE Gardener's Reward Program** and you'll enjoy:

New quick rewards: Receive a \$5 Coupon for every 200 points you earn. Each dollar spent earns one(1) point.

Promotions: Advance invitations to gardening events and sales by postal mail or email.

Gardener's Notebook: FREE subscription to this Gardener's Notebook newsletter

All Sloat Garden Center locations are open for in-store shopping with safety protocols in place. The number of customers allowed in each of our premises is limited. Masks plus 6-foot physical distancing is enforced.