

TOMATO PRUNING

What is a sucker?

While not absolutely necessary, pruning tomato plants can maximize the number, size and flavor of your tomatoes. During their first several weeks in the garden, before blossoms emerge, tomato plants put their energy into growing new leaves and extra branches to hold those leaves. These side stems grow directly off the main stem. Suckers are new branches that grow out of the tomato's main stem, just above a side stem (in the "crotch"). A tomato plant will produce suckers throughout the growing season.

Why prune suckers?

Although it requires a bit of extra work, removing the suckers from your plants is beneficial in several different ways.

Earlier production: Fewer stems on the plant means more of the plant's energy will go into producing fruit rather than growing stems and leaves.

Larger, healthier fruit: Overgrowth means less sunlight for leaves and less energy for fruit growth.

Disease prevention: Pruning reduces the density of the leaves that can trap excess moisture promoting the spread of disease.

How to prune

Pruning suckers is best done when the shoot is young and vulnerable. Carefully grasp the base of the sucker and pinch it between your thumb and forefinger. This method is preferable to clipping or slicing as it results in a smaller wound on the plant that will heal more quickly.



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