

PLANTOGROVE FIELD WORKSHEET | VEGETABLE & SMALL-SPACE GARDENING (PG009)

Tomato Tower Setup & Training Checklist

Tomatoes do not twine around stakes on their own. Anchor supports at planting time and attach stems loosely with soft ties.

1. VARIETY, GROWTH HABIT, IN-GROUND VS. CONTAINER DECISION & BASE SPACING WORKSHEET

1. Tomato Variety & Habit:

Cultivar: _____ [] Indeterminate (vining, 6-8 ft poles) [] Determinate (bush, 3-4 ft support)

2. In-Ground vs. Container:

[] Raised bed / in-ground row [] Container (Diam: _____ in. Vol: _____ gal; 5+ gal for standard cultivars)

3. Pole & Anchor Check:

Pole material: [] Heavy bamboo [] Wood stake [] Steel Total length: _____ ft Soil embed depth: _____ in.

4. Base Spacing Worksheet:

Base leg span: _____ in. wide Plant-to-plant spacing: _____ in./ft (typically 2.5-4 ft) Install date: _____

2. SUPPORT COMPARISON CHECKLIST (MATCH STRUCTURE TO PLANT & SITE)

Support Type	Best For	Main Strength	Main Limitation
[] Single Stake	1-2 pruned leaders in beds	Compact footprint; easy harvest	Needs weekly tying & deep anchor
[] 3-Pole Tripod	Raised beds & wide 5+ gal pots	Triangulated base resists wind	Must tie stems; wide base needed
[] Heavy-Duty Cage	Determinate or unpruned vines	Less weekly tying once inside	Skip flimsy 3-ft cones for vining types
[] String Trellis	Rows with rigid overhead frame	Great for high-tunnel/row leaders	Requires strong overhead beam

3. INSTALLATION SEQUENCE & LOOSE-TIE PLACEMENT GUIDE (DO NOT PINCH STEMS OR CLUSTERS)

- ☐ Install poles at planting time (drive 10-12 in. deep into bed soil or to bottom perimeter of 5+ gal pot) before roots spread.
- ☐ Angle 3-4 poles into a wide base around the plant and lash top intersection tightly so legs cannot scissor or twist.
- ☐ Guide main stem(s) upright every 10-12 in. using 1/2-in. soft plant tape, cloth strips, or soft twine (never thin wire).
- ☐ LOOSE-TIE RULE: Anchor tie snugly to the pole first, then form a loose figure-8 / loop leaving 1-2 in. slack around the stem.
- ☐ CLUSTER PROTECTION: Place ties just below or above flower/fruit trusses-never trap flower stems inside the tie loop.

4. WATERING, FEEDING, SUN, BRANCH SUPPORT & WIND INSPECTION CHECKLIST

- ☐ Sun & Moisture: Verify 6-8+ hrs direct sun; water deeply at soil level (avoid wetting foliage late in day) and mulch 2-3 in.
- ☐ Balanced Feeding: Avoid excessive nitrogen that pushes lush, top-heavy leaf growth at the expense of fruit set.
- ☐ Conservative Pruning: On indeterminate plants, remove only suckers needed to fit poles; DO NOT heavily prune determinate bushes.
- ☐ Branch & Wind Check: Add soft slings under heavy fruit clusters; check pole anchorage and loosen snug ties after summer storms.

5. WEEKLY TRAINING, TIE-CHECK & SEASONAL OBSERVATION / HARVEST LOG

Date / Week	Plant Height	New Ties Added	Old Ties Checked?	Fruit Set / Wind / Harvest Notes
___/___/20__	_____ in./ft	_____ ties @ ___ in.	[] Loose [] Adjusted	_____
___/___/20__	_____ in./ft	_____ ties @ ___ in.	[] Loose [] Adjusted	_____
___/___/20__	_____ in./ft	_____ ties @ ___ in.	[] Loose [] Adjusted	_____
___/___/20__	_____ in./ft	_____ ties @ ___ in.	[] Loose [] Adjusted	_____

6. REFERENCED COOPERATIVE EXTENSION PUBLICATIONS (ZERO AFFILIATE LINKS)

UMN Extension - Trellises & cages / Growing tomatoes: <https://extension.umn.edu/garden-and-home/yard-and-garden/gardening-in-minnesota/trellises-and-cages>

Oregon State University Extension - Grow Your Own Tomatoes and Tomatillos (EC 1333): <https://extension.oregonstate.edu/catalog/ec-1333-grow-your-own-tomatoes-tomatillos>

University of Maryland Extension - Growing Vegetables in Containers: <https://extension.umd.edu/resource/growing-vegetables-containers-and-salad-tables>

UNH Extension - Tips for Small Space Gardening (Pots & Containers): <https://extension.unh.edu/blog/2024/05/tips-small-space-gardening-pots-and-other-containers>