

URBAN FARMER

LOVE THE EARTH

From Seed to Harvest: A beginner's guide to growing tomatillos

Tomatillos are an ingredient often present in Mexican dishes, and the fruit is grown similarly to a tomato. Tomatillos differ from green tomatoes as they are usually juicier and not as firm. Though commonly used in sauces and salsa, tomatillos can be used in appetizers, desserts and jams as well. Tomatillos also are known as a husk tomato, due to the papery husk covering the fruit.

To plant:

Two or more tomatillo plants are required for the plants to blossom. Wait until all danger of frost has passed before planting the tomatillos outside. Since tomatillos have a long growing season, they can be started indoors up to eight weeks before the last frost date. Plant seeds $\frac{1}{4}$ inch deep and space seedlings 18 to 24 inches apart in rows set 3 to 4 feet apart when transplanting. Tomatillos also grow well in pots and can be planted in 5-gallon buckets.

To grow:

Tomatillos grow similar to a tomato. They like full sun and frequent watering. Adding a layer of mulch around the plants can help deter weeds and retain moisture. They also require staking or cages to support the plant and keep the fruits off the ground. If the plant isn't staked and fruits weigh the plant down, slugs or snails are more apt to feast on the tomatillos. Tomatillos do best in soil with a pH of 6.0 to 7.0. Tomatillos cannot withstand frost, so if a late spring frost is forecasted, be sure to cover the seedlings with newspaper.

To harvest:

Tomatillos are ready to harvest when the green fruit fills out the papery husk. Similar



[Verde Tomatillo seeds available at ufseeds.com](http://ufseeds.com)

to tomatoes, they can be harvested early and then left in a sunny window to further ripen. Before using the tomatillos after harvest, keep the husks on as this lengthens storage time. When you remove the husks, also wash the sticky substance from the tomatillo's flesh.

What tomatillos crave:

Tomatillos are a plant with high yields and adding a fertilizer can aid in the plant's growth. Prior to planting, amend the soil with compost or a 10-10-10 fertilizer and work it several inches deep into the soil. Fertilize again when the first flowers begin to appear, this time using a 5-10-10 fertilizer. This encourages more flowers and fruit production. Over fertilizing can lead to leafy plants with little fruit, so be sure to follow the directions on the fertilizer when it comes to application.

Studying the leaves of the tomatillo plant can show if it has any deficiencies. Leaves with



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a purple tint have a phosphorous deficiency and yellowing leaves means there could be a magnesium deficiency. Fertilizers high in potassium and phosphorous can lead to high fruit yields.

Where to buy tomatillo seeds:

Urban Farmer sells tomatillo seeds on our website at ufseeds.com!



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