



# Vermont Valley Community Farm

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## Tomatoes, Late Blight, What to Do?

Tomatoes are one of the most popular vegetables we grow for you. It seems we can never give too many tomatoes. So last year when the Late Blight disease killed our entire outside tomato crop, it was a big loss for everyone. For those new to the farm, Late Blight is a disease that can be devastating to particularly tomatoes and potatoes. It is the disease made famous by the Irish “potato” famine in the 1800’s. Last year, for the first time ever, Late Blight killed scores of tomato plants in Wisconsin and across the country.

This year, the spread of this disease has been closely monitored. It showed up first in eastern and southern states, and has relentlessly moved closer and closer to your farm. It arrived in Wisconsin several weeks ago and just this week another CSA farm close to us reported Late Blight on their tomatoes. Because of all the early warning signs, several weeks ago, we began spraying the outside tomatoes with a fungicide approved for organic production. Although the material has been used for a very long time and is approved as a safe product by the authorities, we very much do not like the idea of spraying the food we send you. The other option was to not spray and hope the blight avoided us; meaning we risk losing all our tomatoes again. So given the likelihood of the blight arriving here, we choose to spray. The material is a copper product and is sprayed on the entire tomato plant. When the spores of the Late Blight land, they ingest the copper and die. We have to keep spraying weekly to keep the fungicide on all parts of the plant. If any part of the plant gets infected by the Late Blight spore, it will infect the entire plant. The blight is now in our neighborhood but we have yet to see any signs of it on our tomatoes; so it appears we’ve made the best decision.

We have always washed our tomatoes before sending them to you, but now we have an even better reason to. You may want to do the same. The tomatoes you’ve received up to now have been from the greenhouses, which we do not need to spray. Greenhouses protect the foliage from the night dews and the rains, the disease needs moisture to infect plants. The outside tomato harvest has begun, so for the rest of the season some of the tomatoes will be from outside, and some from the greenhouses.

One of the bigger issues with pesticides is the health of the workers who do the harvests and apply the materials. In large scale agriculture, that means migrant workers. For us, that means us. Because of the sprays, we have to take extra precautions when harvesting the tomatoes so we do not get the material on ourselves. We all wear long pants, long sleeves and gloves and wash harvest clothes regularly.

Tomato plants naturally discolor one’s skin with a slight yellowish tint and the presence of copper creates an added incentive to keep all skin covered. For this reason, the tomato u-picks will be we-picks this year (see the article on the second page). We feel it is best if we do the work among the plants ourselves.

In conventional chemical based agriculture, there are all sorts of sprays applied to your food that you will never hear about. Part of belonging to a CSA is being informed about the food you eat. So for now, the tomato crop looks great and we hope it stays that way.

Regarding our potatoes, which also can be killed by Late Blight, we have been spraying them. Of course with potatoes we are spraying the foliage, not the potato delivered to you. The potatoes are nearing the end of their growing time, so soon we will be past the point where the disease could impact them. We anticipate another good potato harvest.

## Tomatoes Tomatoes Tomatoes

Introducing the Vermont Valley Tomato Family. We are now harvesting from every tomato patch on the farm. Here is what you can expect to see in your share box over the next couple of months. Hopefully this will help you identify it when you see it in your share. Most of our tomatoes are Heirloom varieties. An Heirloom is an open pollinated variety that has been passed down for generations.

**Garden Peach:** These 2oz yellow fruits blush pink when ripe and have fuzzy skins somewhat like peaches. Soft skinned, juicy and very sweet. Light fruity taste is not what you would expect in a tomato.

**Green Zebra:** A 3-4 oz tangy salad tomato with green stripes and a yellow blush. Eat them when they get soft.

**Red Zebra:** A small red tomato overlaid with golden yellow stripes, the red version of Green Zebra.

**Roman Candle:** A long, yellow colored, paste tomato. Great for drying, sauce and fresh eating.

**Ruth's, Estiva, Wisconsin 55, Pink Beauty:** Red slicing tomatoes with amazing flavor and texture.

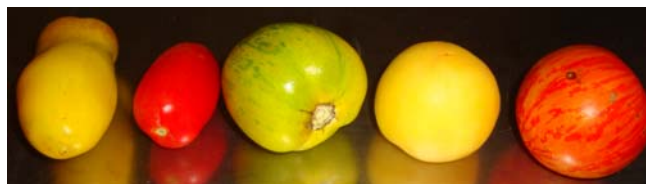
**Cherry Tomatoes:** Sun Gold and Sun Cherry. We mix them up for you.

**Roma/Paste/Plum/Processing Tomatoes:** These tomatoes are drier than most slicing tomatoes, making them perfect for cooking, drying, sauce and salsa making. We grow a mix of traditional red paste tomatoes and others with fascinating shape, size and color. Here are their names: *Debarao, Super Marzano, San Marzano, Monica, Mariana, Viva Italia, Speckled Roman, Amish Paste, Federle, Sheboygan, Opalka, Orange Banana.*

**Black Krim** A slightly flattened, deep red/mahogany colored tomato with heavy green shoulders; interior is a deep reddish-green color, sweet and tasty. Unbelievably rich flavor. The Black Krim is ready to eat when it has turned a very deep purplish-black color, the shoulders may stay green. My personal favorite! (Barb).

**Pruden's Purple** A vivid dark pink skin with crimson flesh. A bit flattened in shape and smooth, except for some shoulder ribbing. An early Brandywine type.

We aim to harvest our tomatoes just before they are vine-ripe. We do this so you don't receive an over ripe tomato. But it also means that you may receive a tomato that needs to sit on your counter for a day or two before it is perfect to eat, heavy and quite soft.



Roman Candle, Juliette, Green Zebra, Garden Peach, Red Zebra



Pruden's Purple, Black Krim, Japanese Black Trifele

## Tomato We-Picks (not U-Picks this year)

Each year we grow an abundance of roma tomatoes just for you to come out and pick, we've been doing this for 16 years. Last season Late Blight took them all down so we were not able to hold u-picks and this year the threat of Late Blight has forced us to take action (see the article on page 1). Consequently we will not be holding u-picks in the traditional way, but we will be offering roma tomatoes, basil, tomatillos and hot peppers. We will pick them, wash them, and you can come out to the farm to purchase them. Here's how it will work:

- E-mail us your desired pounds of tomatoes and which Saturday you would like to come pick them up.
- Saturdays for tomato pick up: August 21, August 28, Sept 4, Sept 11 (All these dates assume late blight does not get us.)
- Time for pick up is 9 - 10 am (please do not come late)
- Your order must be received on the Wednesday prior to your Saturday pick up.
- Indicate if you are also interested in tomatillos and hot peppers. Tomatillos and hot peppers are limited supply, so they are first come first serve (hint: arrive at 9:00)
- We will confirm the availability of your requested amount via email.
- Available: Tomatoes \$2/pound - already picked.  
Basil to u-pick at no cost to you.  
Hot peppers (10 varieties) \$3/pound - already picked.  
Tomatillos \$2/pound - already picked.