VEGETABLES · A SUNNY PATIO WITH ROOM FOR A LARGE CONTAINER

Let's grow cherry tomato.

Solanum lycopersicum

This plan is for **Compact patio cherry tomato**

One roomy pot. Tomatoes within reach.

10-gallon pot **1 compact plant**

Before you start

Plant outdoors after frost danger has passed; this compact tomato needs a sunny spot and a warm growing season.

By jennyzhuang

Sources checked September 25, 2026 View sources

LIGHT

Lots of sun

Choose a spot with 6–8 hours of direct sun.

WATER

Consistent moisture

Check daily; swinging between dry and soaked stresses the plant.

FEEDING

Regular feeding

Use enriched mix first, then continue feeding as it grows.

Eat ripe tomato fruit. Leaves and stems are not food; keep them away from children and pets that may chew plants.

BEFORE YOU START

Your little kit.

- ✓ One stable, draining container of verified 10 US gallon capacity, at least 12 inches deep inside
- ✓ Buy 2 × 1 cu ft bags. Miracle-Gro Organic Potting Mix (US). A cage suited to the mature plant and a watering can.
- ✓ 1 compact cherry tomato nursery start

THE SOIL

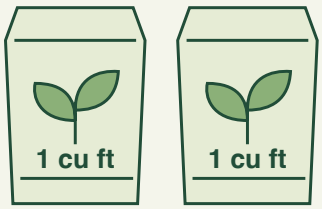
Miracle-Gro Organic Potting Mix (US), 1 cu ft bag, SKU 78951430. Includes starter nutrients; follow the current bag's feeding directions.

Start with what's on this list. Add plant food only when the feeding section says it's needed.

TAKE THIS TO THE GARDEN CENTER

What to buy, and how much.

Buy 2 × 1 cu ft bags.



ORGANIC POTTING MIX

2 bags

Leave room at the rim.
Keep spare mix.

Bag-count illustration; not retail packaging. Match the product name and size below.

LOOK FOR THIS BAG	Miracle-Gro Organic Potting Mix (US) 1 cu ft bag · about 28.3 L · SKU 78951430
MIX TO BUDGET FOR	Up to 37.9 L before watering space and the root ball.

This allowance uses a pot with a measured 10 US gallon capacity. Leave about 1 inch below the rim for watering. Two 1 cu ft bags contain about 56.6 L altogether; keep the extra mix.

Before adding fertilizer: Fresh mix includes starter nutrients. Skip extra fertilizer at planting. Follow the feeding directions on your actual bag; “up to 2 months” is not a guaranteed waiting period. Do not combine the starter program with another full feed.

If your pot is a different size

Before planting, measure loose mix into the empty pot with a marked 1 US gallon container, up to the intended fill line. Record the volume, then remove enough mix to fit the nursery root ball. A nursery pot marked “#3” or “trade gallon” is not a measured US gallon. Leave space for watering; keep spare mix for later.

Use the bag’s cubic feet or liters to compare volumes. A dry quart on a soil bag is larger than a liquid quart on a measuring jug.

Compare all four starter shopping lists →

YOUR SIMPLE GROWING PLAN

One pot. Here's the plan.

A sunny patio with room for a large container. Start with **nursery start**.

THE POT

10-gallon pot

A roomy, stable container with drainage holes, at least 12 inches deep inside.

HOW MANY

1 compact plant

Choose a dwarf or patio cherry tomato, not a full-size vine.

THE CONTAINER

10-gallon pot

START WITH

1 compact plant



Illustration · not to scale

10-gallon pot · 1 compact plant A roomy, stable container with drainage holes, at least 12 inches deep inside. Choose a dwarf or patio cherry tomato, not a full-size vine. Original illustration; not to scale.

01

Wait until frost has passed

Choose a sunny outdoor spot. Bring a tender new plant in if cold weather returns.

02

Fill and plant

Moisten the mix. Remove the lowest leaves and set the stem slightly deeper than its nursery level.

03

Add support now

Install the cage while the roots are still small. Leave room to reach the soil with your watering can.

04

Check, water, and pick

Check daily and water at the base when the top inch is dry. Pick fruit once it reaches its variety's ripe color.

Help with the setup: drainage holes and saucers · potting mix vs. garden soil.

Other ways to start

Start from seed

Follow your seed packet. University of Minnesota recommends starting indoors about 5–6 weeks before you plan to plant outside. Move plants outdoors after frost danger has passed and conditions have warmed. For this first-pot plan, a labeled nursery start avoids the indoor seedling setup.

YOUR EVERYDAY ROUTINE

Water & fertilizer at a glance.

WATER WHEN

Water when the top inch is dry, then drain. Check each morning and again during hot, windy weather.

FERTILIZER

Miracle-Gro Water Soluble All Purpose Plant Food (US 24-8-16)

AMOUNT

1½ tablespoons in 1½ US gallons of water

WHAT THAT AMOUNT COVERS

Mix into water. Apply only enough solution to wet this pot and drain; the mixing batch is not the amount to pour on.

HOW OFTEN TO FEED

Every 14 days during active growth.

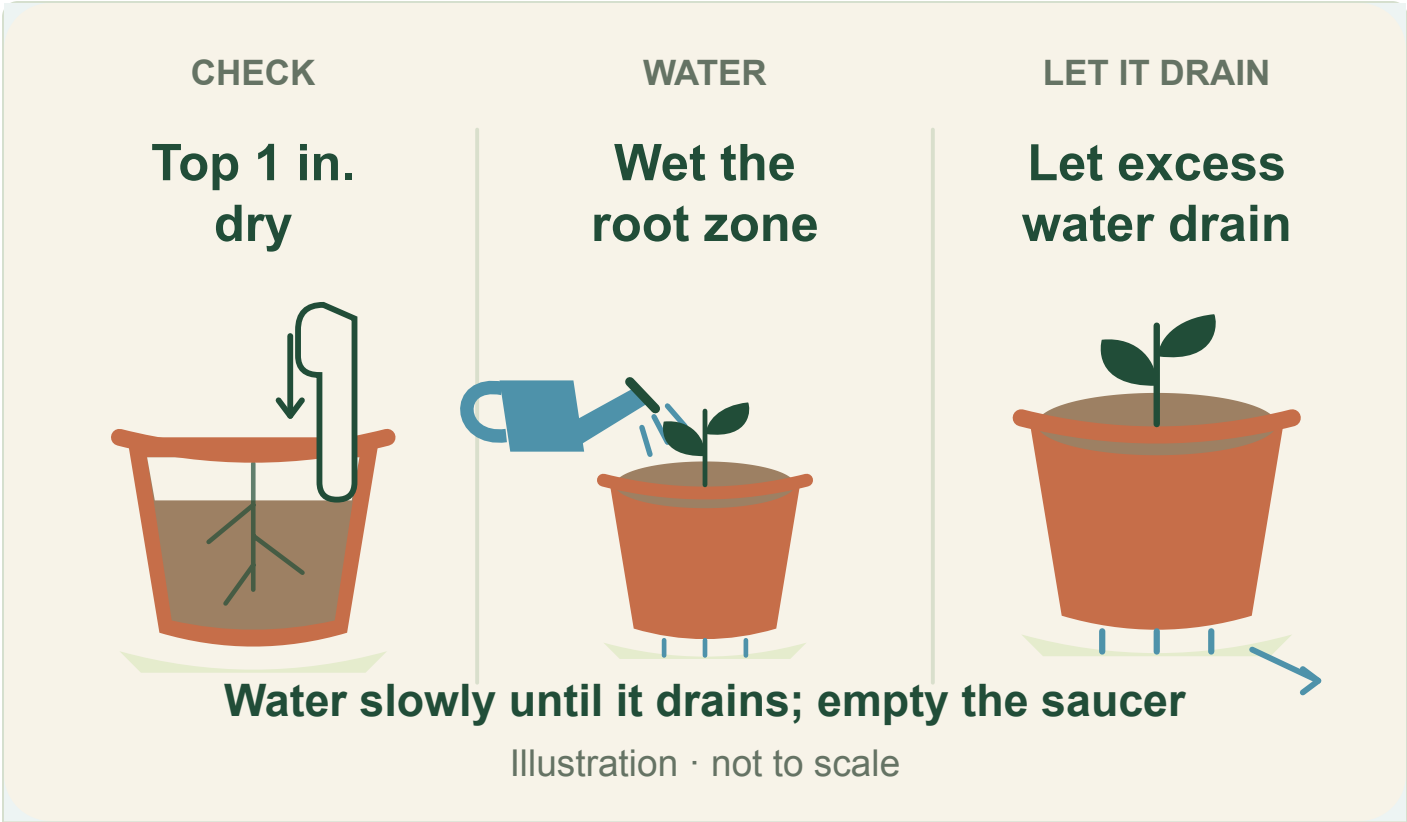
WHEN TO START OR PAUSE

Skip extra feed at planting. Follow your potting-mix bag's starter-feeding directions before adding this routine; "up to 2 months" is not a fixed waiting period. Feed only while actively growing.

01 / EVERYDAY CARE

When to water.

Check every morning, and again during a hot, windy spell. Water when the top inch is dry, letting excess drain freely. Water the mix rather than splashing the leaves.



Check before watering. Water when the top inch is dry, then drain. Check each morning and again during hot, windy weather. Original illustration; not to scale.

> **The easy rule**
>
> Check first. Water only when the plant needs it.

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02 / PLANT FOOD

Exactly what to feed it.

Skip extra fertilizer at planting. Check the potting-mix bag's feeding directions before starting the later routine below. "Feeds for up to 2 months" is a product claim, not a guaranteed two-month waiting period. Do not stack fertilizer programs.



1½ tablespoons in 1½ US gallons of water Mix into water. Apply only enough solution to wet this pot and drain; the mixing batch is not the amount to pour on. Every 14 days during active growth. Skip extra feed at planting. Follow your potting-mix bag's starter-feeding directions before adding this routine; "up to 2 months" is not a fixed waiting period. Feed only while actively growing. Original illustration; not to scale.

US PRODUCT REFERENCE



Miracle-Gro

Water Soluble All Purpose

24-8-16

Soluble: mix into water

Check the official US product ↗

Illustrated reference; check the manufacturer's current packaging and US label.

A SPECIFIC US PRODUCT

Miracle-Gro Water Soluble All Purpose Plant Food (US 24-8-16)

Mix 1½ tablespoons of the US 24-8-16 product into 1½ gallons of water. Feed the soil every 14 days; apply enough to moisten the root zone and let excess drain. Do not pour dry powder onto roots or combine several fertilizer programs.

Check the manufacturer's product page ↗

Use the named US 24-8-16 formulation. Optional later purchase: one 1.5 lb pack. This is a conventional soluble fertilizer; the organic potting mix does not make the entire feeding plan organic. The mixing batch is not a per-pot watering dose.

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03 / WHAT HAPPENS NEXT

When to expect ripe tomatoes

Harvest timing depends on the cultivar and the size of your start. Keep its nursery label: its days-to-harvest estimate is more useful than one number for every tomato.

When to plant outdoors

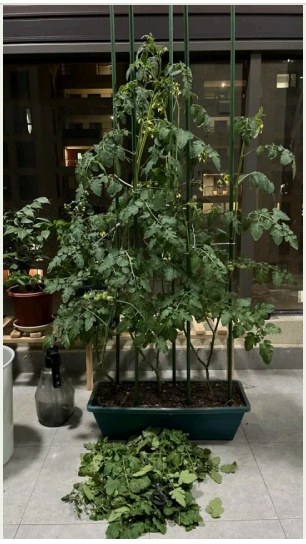
Plant outdoors after local frost risk has passed. This container plan is for a warm-season crop, not year-round outdoor growing everywhere.

For regional planting windows, find your local Cooperative Extension office ↗.

PHOTO NOTES

Stems, supports, and green fruit.

Tomato stems, supports, and green fruit. The variety is unconfirmed; this guide uses one compact cherry tomato in a 10-gallon pot.



A rectangular planter and tall supports, with cut foliage and scissors visible in front. The cut foliage is a visible detail, not a pruning recommendation.

Photo supplied by jennyzhuang.



Developing fruit clusters along supported tomato stems.

Photo supplied by jennyzhuang.

Something looking off?

Will any cherry tomato stay small?

No. Many cherry tomatoes make very long vines. Look for a compact, dwarf, or patio variety and check its mature size.

Why are fruit bottoms turning dark?

Blossom-end rot can involve uneven moisture and excess nitrogen affecting calcium delivery; it is less common in cherry tomatoes. A dark spot alone is not a diagnosis. Check watering, drainage, and feeding before adding anything; eggshells are not a quick fix.

Can I put two plants in this pot?

Keep one for this recipe. Crowding makes watering, feeding, and support harder.

Choosing a pot and support

Choose a forgiving starter pot

Some compact tomatoes can grow in less space. A 10-gallon pot is our more forgiving beginner choice, giving roots and moisture more room; it is not a universal minimum.

Choose and install plant support

A compact plant may suit a cage. Full-size indeterminate vines need much taller, stronger support and a different plan. Install support before roots fill the pot.

BEHIND THIS GUIDE

Where the advice comes from.

Plant care is based on the sources below. Planting layouts and beginner routines combine that guidance into one practical plan; they are editorial choices, not results from a Plant Care Steps growing trial.

- University of Maryland: tomato planting and varieties ↗
  https://extension.umd.edu/resource/growing-tomatoes-home-garden
- University of Maryland: containers and supports ↗
  https://extension.umd.edu/resource/growing-vegetables-containers-and-salad-tables
- University of Minnesota: indoor seed starting ↗
  https://extension.umn.edu/garden-and-home/yard-and-garden/gardening-in-minnesota/starting-seeds-indoors
- Manufacturer: starter feed in the named potting mix ↗
  https://scottsmiraclegro.com/en-us/brands/miracle-gro/products/potting-mix/miracle-gro-organic-potting-mix/78951430.html
- Volume conversion ↗
  https://www.nist.gov/pml/special-publication-811/nist-guide-si-appendix-b-conversion-factors/nist-guide-si-appendix-b8
- NC State: tomato container size and edible fruit versus toxic foliage ↗
  https://plants.ces.ncsu.edu/plants/solanum-lycopersicum/
- University of Minnesota: tomato-specific seed starting ↗
  https://extension.umn.edu/garden-and-home/yard-and-garden/gardening-in-minnesota/growing-tomatoes
- University of Maryland: blossom-end rot and contributing conditions ↗
  https://www.extension.umd.edu/resource/blossom-end-rot-vegetables
- Manufacturer: US fertilizer formula and application directions ↗
  https://scottsmiraclegro.com/en-us/brands/miracle-gro/products/plant-food-and-care/miracle-gro-water-soluble-all-purpose-plant-food.html

Something needs updating? Suggest a correction

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Compiled with AI assistance. These first-edition guides have not yet had an independent horticultural review. Read our editorial approach.