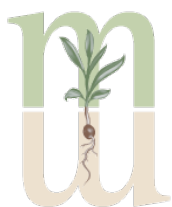
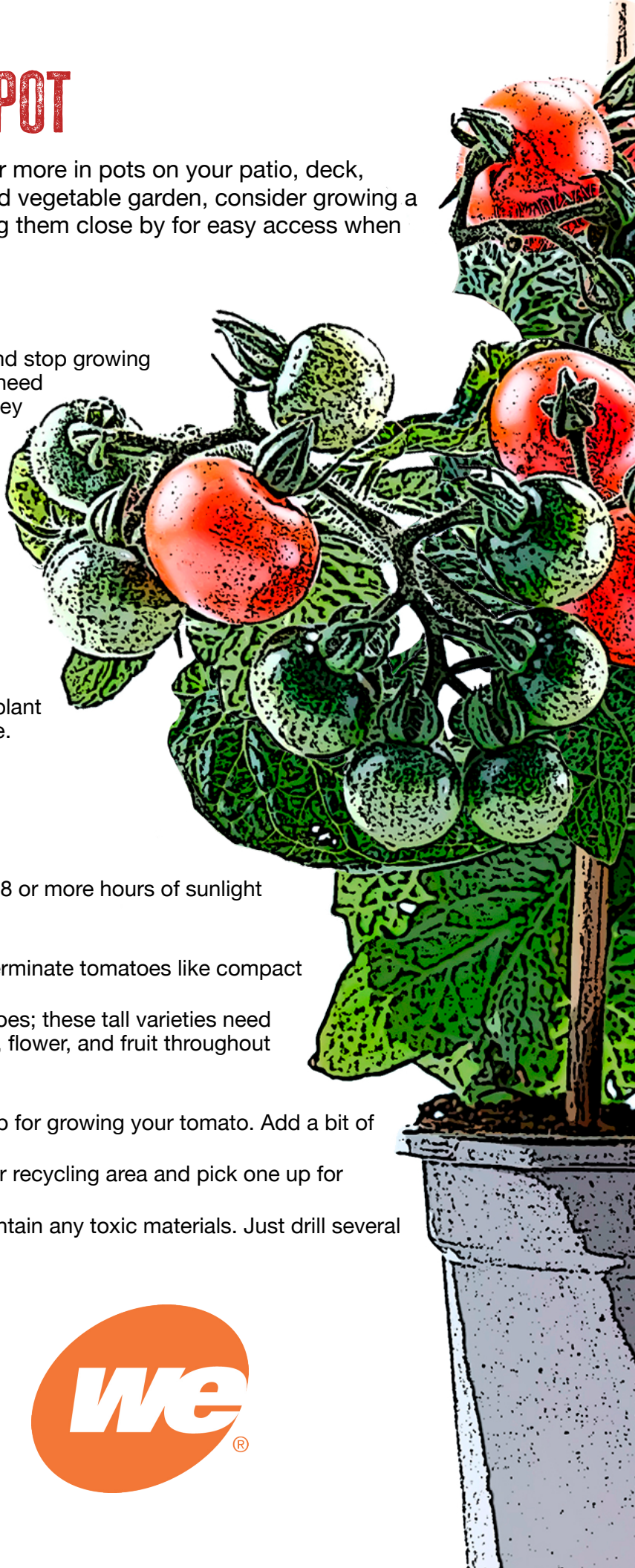


GROW A TOMATO IN A POT

There's always room for tomatoes. Grow one or more in pots on your patio, deck, balcony or porch. Even if you have an in-ground vegetable garden, consider growing a tomato or two in a container. You'll enjoy having them close by for easy access when cooking, snacking and entertaining.

WHAT YOU NEED

- Tomatoes
 - **Determinate** tomatoes grow a certain height and stop growing taller once the fruit begins to form. Some may need support while other smaller varieties do not. They are good options for containers and small space gardens.
 - **Indeterminate** tomatoes keep growing taller, producing more flowers and fruit until the end of the growing season or you pinch out the growing tip. You will need to stake or cage these to manage the tall plants.
 - **Tumbling** tomatoes are **semi-determinate** and can be trained onto a support or allowed to cascade over the edge of a hanging basket.
 - Check the tag for disease resistance noted by letters. Numbers following the letter mean the plant is resistant to that particular race of the disease.
 - F – Fusarium
 - V – Verticillium
 - T – Tobacco Mosaic
 - N – Nematodes
 - A – Alternaria
- Sunny location that receives at least 6 preferably 8 or more hours of sunlight each day.
- Container with drainage holes.
 - At least 18" in diameter (2 to 3 gallons) for determinate tomatoes like compact patio types.
 - At least 24" (5 gallons) for indeterminate tomatoes; these tall varieties need large strong supports as they continue to grow, flower, and fruit throughout the season.
 - Save money and repurpose containers
 - Use the nursery pot from a large tree or shrub for growing your tomato. Add a bit of paint if you want to dress it up.
 - ❖ No pots in the shed? Visit the garden center recycling area and pick one up for free.
 - Repurpose a 5-gallon bucket that did not contain any toxic materials. Just drill several holes in the bottom for drainage.



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- Supports for taller varieties
 - Decorative obelisks, functional tomato towers, bamboo hoops and other plant supports.
 - Select a style strong enough to support the tomato variety you decide to grow.
 - Some containers now have built-in supports to make this easier.
- Quality potting mix that retains moisture and is well-drained.
- Fertilizer
 - Slow-release fertilizer
 - Applied at planting and again mid-season if needed
 - Or, a soluble fertilizer labeled for vegetables
 - These are applied every week or two according to label directions.
- Sun-loving herbs and flowers (optional)
 - Brighten the containers with a few flowers and herbs
 - You can have beauty and flavor in one container
 - Or, have a bigger harvest by growing just one tomato with no additional plants in the pot.
- Plant caddy with wheels if you need to move the planter in and out of the sunlight or out of the way for entertaining. (optional)

PLANTING

- Plant long leggy tomatoes several inches deeper than they are growing in the nursery container. Remove the lower leaves on the bottom few inches of the stem. Bury the rootball and bare stem to just below the remaining leaves. Roots will eventually form along the stem providing added support, water, and nutrients for the plant.
- Install any needed support at planting being careful not to damage the roots and stems.
- Fertilize according to label directions.
- Spread a thin layer of shredded leaves or evergreen needles over the soil surface to conserve moisture.

ONGOING CARE

- Check soil moisture daily
 - Water thoroughly whenever the top few inches are starting to dry.
 - Consider enlisting DIY or commercial watering devices and drip irrigation systems that can help with this task. (optional)
- Fertilize according to label directions.
 - Don't overfertilize. More is not always better. Too much nitrogen results in lots of leaves and no tomatoes.
- Prune wayward branches as needed to contain plants within the tower, obelisk or support.
- Training one or two stems onto a single stake requires more pruning.
 - Remove suckers, the stems that develop between the leaf and main stem, as they appear. These eventually develop into stems, producing a plant that is too large for the stake. Removing these contains growth but reduces the size of the harvest.
 - Loosely tie the main stems to the support as the plant continues to grow. Use cloth strips, twine, or other soft ties to secure the stems to the support.

HARVESTING

- Harvest tomatoes when fully colored.
 - Leave them on the plant an extra 5 or 6 days for even better flavor.
 - Unfortunately, squirrels and chipmunks may beat you to the harvest.
 - Harvest tomatoes when they just begin showing color and finish ripening them indoors if critters or a fall frost threaten your harvest.
 - ❖ Store these in a cool dark location until several days before you plan on using them. Move to a warm location and watch them turn red and be ready for use.