

URBAN FARMER

LOVE THE EARTH

How to side graft tomatoes:

Grafting is a technique often used with trees, such as apple trees, to join two parts of a plant together by tissue regeneration. However, it can also be used in other plants, such as tomatoes. Grafting is done on tomatoes in order to provide more disease-resistant varieties, and it can also reduce the need to use pesticides. The process of top grafting tomatoes can take from 6-8 weeks.

Pick the right rootstock to use, and sow your seeds indoors 6 to 8 weeks before the transplant date. Once the seeds have germinated, wait 10 days and then reduce the temperature to 64 to 66 degrees to encourage the plants to grow stocky. Overplant your seeds by at least 25 percent.

The seedlings should be ready for grafting about 17 to 21 days after you sow the seeds. Use a grafting clip to decide if the plants are ready or not, and when you put the grafting clip on the stem of the seedling, the seedling is ready when the clip fits snugly. Prepare a clean area indoors and do not graft near a fan or a vent. Graft with new blades and clips, and don't smoke while grafting or you may pass on the Tobacco Mosaic Virus to your plants. Make sure you have a healing chamber to store your plants in following the graft. A healing chamber will keep the plants in a high-humidity, low-light controlled environment as they heal.

Water your plants normally the day before grafting, but don't water the day of the procedure.

Side grafting varies slightly from top grafting, but much of the process remains the same. Select a rootstock and a scion of similar size, and then defoliate the lower leaves of each piece. Then, cut off the top



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of the rootstock by making an upward cut about two-thirds of the way through the rootstock's stem. Make a downward cut on the scion two-thirds of the way through the stem, as well. Line the incisions up together, side by side, and place a grafting clip over the incisions. Put the plants in a pot that is large enough to hold both root balls to reduce the stress on the plant. Keep the plants in the healing chamber for three days, and then prepare to cut the scion's root ball. Attach the seedlings to a stake for stabilization and then cut partway through the scion's stem, but not all the way. Replace the healing chamber dome and wait two more days before you fully cut the stem. Once the root is severed from the scion, put the graft in normal greenhouse conditions. The best time to introduce the graft into the greenhouse is in the evening or on a cloudy day.



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