

OGC February 2020 Hilltop Highlights Newsletter Submission

Dwarf Tomatoes STAND TALL

The Old Farmers 2020 Almanac, Gayla Trail (www.yourowgirl.com)

The author points out that indeterminate (vining) and determinate (bush) tomatoes take up too much space to grow in the limited space of our OGC plots. Dwarf Tomatoes are stocky and compact (no more than 5 feet at maturity.) They are well suited for growing in pots on the sunny patios. Dwarfs can be either determinate (one crop per season) or indeterminates (tree types, such as those hybrids created in the Dwarf Tomato Project.) She is partial to the determinate variety “Hahms Gelbe Topftomate” which is an enthusiastic producer. She also likes the “Red Robin” dwarf that is also a generous producer. Both come in around 50 to 60 days.

“The Dwarf Tomato Project”

The Old Farmers 2020 Almanac, Gayla Trail

The project goal was to produce a vining (indeterminate) dwarf tomato with the full scope of color, shape and flavor diversity found in larger heirlooms. Graig LeHoullier of North Carolina and Australian Patrina Nuske Small worked together between 2006 and 2010 to develop over 70 varieties. The author recommends the sweet and prolific “Dwarf Sweet Sue”, the smokey and dark “Dwarf Wild Fred” and the complex flavors of “Rosella Purple.” Earlier fresh tomatoes with tasty yields on compact plants that can be grown just about anywhere you’ve got enough sunlight and room for a pot. What’s not to love about these “love apples”? (pommes d’amour)

Time to Start Seeds for Spring Transplants

Although February is too soon for planting warm season vegetables and annuals in the ground, it’s not too early for seeds planted indoors. Grow your own transplants in flats or pots filled with sterilized potting soil. Keep the seeds at 70°F. Bright light for healthy transplants can be provided by a fluorescent shop light hung 7 to 10 inches above your plants. Leave the light on from 14 to 16 hours per day. You should give your plants a gentle transition into the garden three weeks before transferring. The first week is okay to move them outdoors in the shade during the day. The next week move them to full sun during the daytime only. The third week leave them out at night to harden them. If you do this with the tomatoes listed in the first two articles you should have some nice plants to transfer to your garden or patio pots in April.