

# Fresh Story | Tomato



**Did you know** that tomatoes are an example of a fruit? Many people become confused over this classification as tomatoes are typically used in savoury dishes, rather than sweet desserts. Botanically, however, tomatoes are considered fruits because they develop from the ovary of a flowering plant, and they contain seeds. The term vegetable is actually a culinary term rather than a scientific or botanical one. It is simply used to refer to the edible parts of plants including leaves (lettuce), stems (celery), and roots (carrot).



**In Nova Scotia, tomatoes are grown in both home gardens and commercially on farms.** They can be grown seasonally outdoors, or year-round in greenhouses. Tomatoes come in many different varieties that are all great for different ways of cooking and eating. Scotia tomatoes, a variety developed in Nova Scotia, are sweet and flavorful. Tiny grape and cherry tomatoes are great for snacks and salads and beefsteak tomatoes are nice to slice for sandwiches. Paste tomatoes are perfect for making tomato sauce. Most of the tomatoes we grow in Nova Scotia are either eaten within the province or shipped to nearby places like the other Atlantic provinces. They are best eaten when they are fresh off the vine!

**Tomato farmers are committed to taking care of the environment.** They use smart ways to save water, protect plants from pests without harmful chemicals, and even use cleaner energy in the greenhouses. Field grown tomatoes are less intensive in their production methods, but they require more of other resources such as water.



**For best production yields, all farmers must care for tomatoes differently from other crops.** Tomatoes also get very heavy as they ripen which can damage the plant. Therefore, farmers use “tomato cages”, high wires, or other supports to help the plants stay upright. Aside from helping them stay upright, farmers must perform a task called “removing suckers”. Suckers are extra branches of the tomato plant that do not grow fruit and tend to “suck” the energy from the plants, leading to smaller fruits. In addition to this, farmers also pinch extra flowers from each plant. Since the flowers are what eventually becomes the ripe, juicy tomatoes we like to eat, farmers limit the number of tomatoes that can be produced so the plant diverts more energy into growing big tomatoes rather than many tomatoes. This also helps to prevent the plant from being weighed down unnecessarily.





## Activities for P-3

**SCIENCE** – Learners can explore their five senses by identifying various adjectives to describe the tomatoes they are eating. They should describe things such as texture, smell, and shape of the tomato, and explain which senses they are using to identify these traits. The students can be blindfolded for this activity for added effect if the teacher chooses to do so.

## Activities for 4-6

**SCIENCE** – The teacher can take two ripe tomatoes with stems. One can be placed in a glass of clear water, and the other can be placed in a glass of water with blue food colouring. The tomatoes should be left overnight, and in the morning, the teacher can cut each tomato in half. This should provoke a discussion about how plants absorb their nutrients, and the relationship between living and non-living things in the environment.

**HEALTH EDUCATION** – Students can create a list or a word cloud as a class of various foods that contain tomatoes. After creating the list, they can class their foods into categories such as favourite foods, snacks and dinners, and which foods may be healthier than others. For example, the list may include cherry tomatoes, spaghetti, and ketchup chips. Although all foods do contain tomatoes, the costs and health benefits to consuming each vary widely.

**ENGLISH LANGUAGE ARTS** – Students can write a poem about their experience in eating tomatoes or about a tomato growing from a planted seed. The teacher should encourage students to use descriptive wording in order to create lots of imagery relating to their experience with the tomato.

**MATH** – Students could taste test multiple varieties of tomatoes or taste test different preservation methods of tomatoes (e. ketchup, pasta sauce, canned, crushed, sun dried, etc.) and create a voting system, or a poll based on their favourite tomato. If multiple varieties of tomato are not available, students could vote on if they love tomatoes, strongly dislike tomatoes, or are neutral about tomatoes. The teacher can then have students count the results of their poll and discuss their findings.

The tomato offers  
its gift of fiery  
colour and cool  
completeness

– Pablo Neruda

