

# Hybrid vs. Heirloom Tomatoes – Which is Better?

**Meta Description:** Hybrid or heirloom tomatoes: Which are best? Which should you grow? Here's a breakdown of the pros and cons of hybrids vs. heirloom tomatoes.

**Relevant video link:** <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=EFJOixGywrl>

**Alternative titles:**

- Which is Better: Hybrid or Heirloom Tomatoes? (Pros and Cons of Heirlooms and Hybrids)
- Heirlooms vs. Hybrid Tomatoes - Which is Best? (Here's How to Decide What Tomatoes to Grow)
- How to Decide Whether You Should Grow Hybrid or Heirloom Tomatoes

Tomatoes are a staple in the garden. Whether you're a gardener or not, you probably don't need me to tell you this! When you're breaking into the hobby or profession of gardening, you'll encounter a lot of new words and ideas.

Among that new vocabulary (along with determinate and indeterminate tomatoes), you'll discover that there are hybrid and heirloom tomatoes. And that some people prefer one to the other. Understanding their differences will help you make tomato-growing decisions throughout your experience as a gardener.

There are so many types of tomatoes to choose from, but how do you know which is the best type for you? Are hybrid or heirloom tomatoes the better option? Here's a look at the differences between hybrid and heirloom tomatoes to help you decide which is best for your garden.

## What is the difference between a hybrid and an heirloom tomato?

### What is a hybrid?

A hybrid is a type of tomato that is created by cross-breeding two different types of tomatoes. The resulting plant is a mix of the characteristics of both parent plants.

### What is an heirloom?

An heirloom tomato is a type of tomato that has been passed down through generations of families. Heirloom tomatoes are open-pollinated, which means that they can be pollinated by insects, birds, or the wind.

# Which is better: Hybrid or heirloom?

No matter which kind of tomato you go with, you'll have access to more varieties than you can imagine. Some people will say that there are more varieties to choose from if you pick heirlooms, but the reality is that there are thousands of varieties on either side of the coin.

Let's examine the pros and cons of hybrid and heirloom tomatoes so you can determine if one option might be the best for you. Keep in mind that many gardeners grow both types of tomatoes!

## Pros of hybrids

### Reliable

Are you tired of struggling through uncooperative weather conditions and fighting off garden pests just to get a decent tomato harvest? Hybrids have been bred specifically for their hardiness, allowing them to thrive in a range of conditions and withstand less-than-ideal treatment. They often outperform heirloom varieties in harsh weather and pest management.

### Less disease-prone

Hybrid tomatoes are not as prone to disease compared to heirlooms. This is because hybrids are created by cross-breeding different varieties of tomatoes. This process strengthens the plant, making it resistant to various diseases.

### Grow in different conditions

While heirlooms are often finicky and only grow well in certain conditions, hybrids are much more versatile. They can be grown in various climates and soil types, making them easier to care for.

### Higher yields

Hybrids are a good way to go if you're looking for a tomato that will produce a large harvest. They often bear fruit earlier in the season and produce more tomatoes per plant than heirlooms.

### Visual consistency

When you grow a hybrid tomato, you know exactly what you're going to get, for the most part. Each year, the fruit will be the same size, shape, and color. With heirlooms, there's more variation in appearance from year to year and fruit to fruit.

While not every gardener cares about eating perfectly round or flawless tomatoes, tomato growers who take their harvest to farmer's markets might have to grow hybrid tomatoes to meet the demands of their customer base. Most people will prefer to buy produce without imperfections, no matter how slight.

## **Cons of hybrids**

### **Can't save seeds**

Many gardeners like to save seeds from their plants so they can replant them the following year. You can't do this with hybrid tomatoes since they don't grow true to form. That means if you plant the seeds from a hybrid tomato, you won't end up with the same type of plant (and fruit) as the parent plant. If you want to grow hybrid tomatoes, you have to buy new seeds or plants each year.

### **Flavor**

Some say hybrid tomatoes don't have as much flavor as heirlooms. This is because hybrids are bred for other traits, such as disease resistance and yield, rather than flavor. Of course, there are always exceptions to the rule – some hybrid varieties have great flavor. It just takes a little more effort to find them.

## **Pros of heirlooms**

### **Flavor**

The number one reason why people grow heirloom tomatoes is the flavor. These varieties have been around for generations and have been selected for their unique tastes. Heirlooms are the way to go if you're looking for a tomato with real flavor.

### **Can save seeds**

Unlike hybrids, heirloom tomatoes will grow true to form, which means you can save the seeds from your plants to grow again next year. This is a great way to keep your favorite varieties going year after year.

### **Old-world tomatoes**

Heirloom tomatoes are a favorite among gardeners who value tradition and history because they are the types of tomatoes that were grown in Europe and other parts of the world before hybrids were developed. These varieties have a lot of history and character that you just can't find in hybrids.

## More visually interesting

Heirlooms come in a wide range of shapes, sizes, and colors, making them more visually interesting than hybrids. If you're looking for tomatoes to add some excitement to your garden, heirlooms are worth trying out.

## Cons of heirlooms

### Lower yield

Heirlooms often produce fewer tomatoes per plant than hybrids. This is because they are less resistant to disease and pests and because they don't produce fruit as early in the season.

### More finicky

Heirlooms can be more finicky than hybrids when it comes to growing conditions. They often prefer warm weather and need just enough water and nutrients to produce a good crop.

### Can be disease-prone

Another downside of heirloom tomatoes is that they can be more susceptible to disease than hybrids. This is because they haven't been bred for disease resistance like hybrids have.

### Prone to catfacing and strange appearance

Some heirloom varieties are prone to catfacing, which is when the fruit doesn't develop properly and has deformities. Heirlooms can also be more variable in appearance than hybrids, which some gardeners find unappealing.

## Popular heirloom varieties

Heirloom tomatoes have been passed down through generations for their unique flavors and characteristics. There are many different varieties to choose from, each with its own distinct traits.

- The **Brandywine** tomato has a rich, sweet flavor and can grow to be quite large.
- **Green Zebra** tomatoes have a tart flavor and green stripes on their skin.
- The **Cherokee Purple** variety features dark, almost black skin and has a sweet, smoky taste.
- Another favorite is the **Yellow Pear** tomato, which is small in size but packs a tangy punch.

No matter your preferences, growing heirloom tomatoes can add delicious variety to your summer salads and dishes. So why not take a chance on one of these beloved varieties and see what makes them so special?

## Popular hybrid varieties

These tomatoes are specially bred for traits such as disease resistance, high yield, and optimal flavor.

- One popular choice is the **Sungold** Cherry Tomato which is routinely described as one of the tastiest cherry tomatoes on the planet.
- The **Red Robin** cherry tomato offers abundant clusters of sweet, bite-sized fruits for gardeners with limited space.
- And if you're looking for something a bit unusual, try out **Indigo Rose** – this hybrid boasts deep purple skin and a unique, tangy flavor.

No matter what type, hybrid tomatoes are sure to add exciting variety to your summer harvest.

## FAQ about hybrid vs. heirloom tomatoes

### What's the difference between a hybrid and an heirloom tomato?

Heirloom tomatoes are older varieties that have been passed down through generations, while hybrids are specially bred for specific traits.

### Which type of tomato is better?

There is no clear answer – it depends on your preferences. Heirlooms offer unique flavors and history, while hybrids tend to be more disease-resistant and productive.

### Can I save seeds from heirloom tomatoes?

Yes, unlike hybrids, heirloom tomatoes will grow true to form, which means you can save the seeds from your plants to grow again next year.

### Do heirloom tomatoes taste better than hybrid tomatoes?

This is a matter of personal preference, but many people say heirlooms have richer, more complex flavors than hybrids.

## **What is the tastiest tomato variety?**

Again, this is a matter of personal preference. Some popular heirloom varieties include Brandywine, Cherokee Purple, and Yellow Pear.

## **Which type of tomato is more disease-resistant?**

Hybrids are typically more disease-resistant than heirlooms since they've been bred for this trait. However, there are some exceptions. When purchasing tomato seeds, read about the disease resistance of each variety.

## **What is the best eating tomato?**

Brandywine tomatoes of all colors are famous for their taste - these are large beefsteak tomatoes. Paul Robison tomatoes have an interesting smoky flavor. Black Krim and Cherokee Purple are popular varieties for taste. For canning or paste tomatoes, popular varieties are San Marzano, Roma, and Jersey Devil. There are hundreds of varieties of tomatoes out there to try, however!

## **What are the disadvantages of hybrid seeds?**

The main disadvantage of hybrid seeds is that they are sterile, which means you can't save the seeds from your plants to grow next year. Additionally, hybrids may be less flavorful than heirlooms.

## **What are the disadvantages of heirloom seeds?**

One downside of growing heirlooms is that they can be more susceptible to disease. Additionally, heirloom seeds can be more expensive than hybrid seeds.

## **What is the best tomato for making sauce?**

The best tomatoes for making sauce are paste tomatoes, such as San Marzano, Roma, or Jersey Devil. These varieties have fewer seeds and a higher flesh concentration, making for a smoother sauce.

## **Why do farmers prefer hybrid seeds?**

There are several reasons why farmers prefer hybrid seeds. Hybrid seeds are typically more disease-resistant, which means farmers don't have to worry about losing their crops to pests or diseases. Additionally, hybrids tend to produce higher yields than heirlooms. Hybrids produce

reliably similar tomatoes, visually speaking, which can be important when selling at farmer's markets.

### **Are heirloom tomatoes better for you?**

No, there isn't any scientific evidence to support this. Heirloom tomatoes don't have more nutritional value than hybrids.

### **Are hybrid tomatoes GMO?**

Manually cross two different compatible varieties of plants within the same species to create hybrid plants. In contrast, use high-tech methods - including gene splicing - to make GMOs. Yields from GMOing sometimes produce organisms that would never occur in nature.

## **Conclusion**

So, which is better – hybrid or heirloom tomatoes?

It really depends on what you're looking for in a tomato. If you're interested in flavor, heirlooms are the way to go. But hybrids might be a better option if you're looking for disease resistance and higher yields.

That being said, gardening has so much potential for experimentation, and the truth is that there may be multiple hybrid and heirloom varieties that grow exceptionally well in your area. My advice is to do your best to grow many different varieties and make notes on what works and what doesn't.

Alternatively, select the tomatoes that you want to grow based on their flavor rather than their classification. This way, you'll be sure to end up with a delicious crop no matter what!

Have you ever grown heirloom or hybrid tomatoes? What was your experience? Let us know in the comments below!