

## Tomato Variety Selection

This is Gardening with Chuck on 1420 KJCK, I'm Chuck Otte, Geary County, K-State Research and Extension Ag & Natural Resources Agent. There are thousands of varieties and hybrids of tomatoes simply because everybody is looking for something different in a tomato. Some want a big slicer, some want a prolific producer for salsa, others want an early variety so they are the first ones on the street with fresh tomatoes. Some folks want a cherry or grape tomato so they can have easy snacking. Some want a yellow fruit, others want red or orange. Some want an heirloom because it tastes better. But most gardeners just want a tomato plant or plants that will be a reliable producer. All over the country there are trials done on vegetables. Many Extension services across the country and master gardeners are involved in some of these very scientific replicated studies. Our neighbors to the east, University of Missouri have completed the first year of a study. You always want to be cautious with just one year of data but there's some interesting results. Looking at just two factors right now, total yield and individual fruit size, we see some interesting results. For heavy yielding the top ten varieties were primarily modern style, although three of the top ten were heirloom varieties. But when we get to consistently large fruit, the top ten varieties were all heirloom varieties. Some common varieties that were top yielders included Celebrity, Big Beef, Beef Master and Red Brandywine. These all average 20 pounds or more per plant for the season. For some large fruited there was Amana Orange, German Queen and again, Red Brandywine. These had fruit that average 1/2 to 3/4 pound or more. Contact me for more info.

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## All America Selections

This is Gardening with Chuck on 1420 KJCK, I'm Chuck Otte, Geary County, K-State Research and Extension Ag & Natural Resources Agent. We are always talking about All Americans as it refers to athletes and even scholars, but did you know that there are also All American selections for plants? There is a group that does evaluation and testing all across North America. They have national winners as well as regional winners, Kansas is in the Heartland Region by the way. You can find this group's website by plugging all American plant selections into your favorite search engine and the first thing that pops up should be their website. The 2014 winners have been announced but let me first forewarn you that it is sometimes a year or two before these varieties will be widely available in the trade. This year there were 6 vegetable winners, 2 bedding plant winners and one flower winner but in reality, the two bedding plants are flowering annuals so let's just say three flowers. The perennial flower is a penstemon called Arabesque Red. This one should be very exciting to hummingbird fanciers and it's the first penstemon in 80 years of all American winners. The two bedding plants were a Gaura called Sparkle White and a Petunia called African Sunset that has orange hued flowers. Quickly now, the SIX vegetable winners. A bean, yes a very slender green bean called Mascotte, a bush type cucumber called Pick A Bushel, A yellow pepper called Mama Mia Giallo, and three tomatoes: Chef's Choice Orange - an heirloom looking hybrid, Fantastico a bush type grape tomato that can produce over ten pounds of fruit and a medium to large beefsteak style tomato called Mountain Merit. Check out the website! This has been Gardening with Chuck on the Talk of JC, 1420 KJCK, I'm Chuck Otte.

## Lights for indoor gardeners

This is Gardening with Chuck on 1420 KJCK, I'm Chuck Otte, Geary County, K-State Research and Extension Ag & Natural Resources Agent. We are heading into the time of year when gardeners often are starting garden and bedding plants indoors. To do this we need bright lights and for years, many of us have used standard double bulb 4 foot fluorescent light fixtures. When I did this I had two fixtures that were adjustable and I'd keep them just an inch or two off the tops of the plants. Fluorescent bulbs are classified with a T followed by a number which was the diameter of the bulb in eighths of an inch. For years we all used T-12 bulbs which are now being phased out. We can now use T-8 and T-5 bulbs. Interestingly, T-8's and T-5's, while smaller diameter bulbs give off more light. A T-8 will last 3 to 4 times longer than a T-12 while giving off the same or slightly more light. A T-5 gives producers 2 to 3 times as much light as a T-12 but will only last about twice as long. So here's the catch, and you knew there had to be one. While T-5 lamp fixtures sound ideal, they are hard to get and somewhat expensive. T-8 fixtures and bulbs used to be hard to find and quite a bit more expensive, but in the past couple of years they have become far more readily available and prices have dropped to where there isn't that much difference between them and the T-12 fixtures and bulbs. T-8 bulbs generally use less energy and unless you break them, they are going to last a LONG time. If you have fixtures that you have been using, continue to use those good old T-12s - they'll work just fine. But if you are putting together a new light stand, go ahead and use the T-8 fixtures and bulbs. This has been Gardening with Chuck on the Talk of JC, 1420 KJCK, I'm Chuck Otte.