

LIFESTYLES

SHARE YOUR STORY

The Journal welcomes ideas for stories about people in our community who have gotten married, graduated, joined the military, etc.
Call the Journal at 285-7411

Waiting for ripe tomatoes?

We are all lusting after a home grown tomato, one that smells like a tomato and tastes like one.

During early stages of development, the fruit continues to grow in size and remains green, typically requiring 40-50 days.

Be sure you have selected tomatoes that can ripen in Minnesota. Once the fruit has reached full size (called “mature green”), changes in pigment causes the green to fade to light green then to the pigments for that particular cultivar, be it red, pink, yellow or orange. Two factors that govern ripening and color development of tomato are temperature and the presence of a naturally occurring hormone called “ethylene.”

The optimum temperature range for ripening mature green tomatoes is 68-77 degrees. When temperatures are outside this range for extended periods, conditions may become so stressful that the ripening process halts. Tomatoes do not produce lycopene and carotene, the pigments responsible for ripe



Jesica
CONRAD
MASTER GARDENER

tomato color, when temperatures are above 85 degrees. F.

If frost comes early tomatoes that have reached at least the mature green stage can be ripened off the vine. Look for a color change to at least a lighter green — and a little bit of blush is even better. Those that are still immature green will never ripen, deep-six those to the compost pile.

Store mature green to slightly blushed fruits at 60-65 degrees. F, or warmer if faster ripening is desired. Ripe fruits can be stored cooler, as low as 45 degrees F. The typical home refrigerator is too chilly for storing tomatoes. Never, never put tomatoes in the fridge. Instead, pack fruits in shallow layers and keep in a

well-aerated location where temperatures can be maintained and progress monitored.

Here are some ripening off the vine suggestions.

1. Reduce watering. If tomatoes have reached full or nearly full size, cut back on watering to encourage ripening.

2. Keep the plant dry. Late season is the perfect time for late blight to destroy fruit on the vine. Prevent it by watering the soil, not the plants. Keep plants from trailing on the ground, making them susceptible to diseases.

3. Remove the plant's lower leaves and any diseased leaves you see. More energy will go into the fruit.

4. Pinch off flowers. Removing them will focus the energy on the fruit already on the vine.

5. Pick off small immature fruit. The plant wants to focus on the larger fruit.

6. Pick excess fruit of the ones that are just ripening to allow the rest to ripen on the vine.

7. Pull slightly at the bottom of the plant to shift the roots. The tomato gets the signal that it is time to ripen

on the vine and go to seed. There is a school of thought that says to cut a circle with a knife around the stem of the plant a ways away which does the same thing. I have never tried that.

8. Cover plants at night as temps dip. Ummm, might as well pick them, wrap in newspaper in one layer or pull up and hang upside down in garage or basement for ripening to happen.

9. Check your tomatoes daily when they start showing color. Remove those and the rest will ripen faster.

To find reliable information about vegetable gardening and other horticultural topics, go to the University of Minnesota Extension website <http://www.extension.umn.edu/gardeninfo/>. Local master gardeners will also answer your gardening questions via a voice-mail service. Call 444-7916, leaving your phone number, name and the nature of your question. A volunteer master gardener will give you a call.

Some ‘Silly Science’

As a health reporter, I have to follow as many studies as I can to stay on top of the latest research. The best part of this self-education is reading some of the weird stuff going on in academia. It occurred to me that I should share some of these reports with my readers. So, from time to time, I'll do a column on what I call “Silly Science.” Here goes...

I Believe, Therefore I'm Fat

A study by researchers at Northwestern University in Chicago found signs that people who attend religious services put on more weight.

The researchers reported that 32 percent of those who attended services the most frequently became obese by middle age. Only 22 percent of those who attended services the least became obese.

One theory for the difference in poundage was that many eating traditions surrounding religion involve constant feasts or desserts after services or at holidays. Another possibility, researchers said, was that people who attend services, Bible study and prayer groups aren't getting enough exercise.

(None of the scientists involved considered the fact that most sins burn off calories.)

Breast-Feeding Makes Bigger Brains

Researchers at the University of Durham in England found that brain size relative to body size was most closely associated with the length of time a mother breast feeds and carries her offspring in pregnancy.

According to the research, the amount of time spent breast-feeding affects brain growth after birth; the length of pregnancy determines an offspring's brain size at birth.

They also said the findings from their study of humans and 127 other mammal species offer further proof that breast-feeding is good for brain development and support the World Health Organization's recommendation that babies should be breast-fed exclusively for their first six months of life, followed by continued breast-feeding with other foods up



Fred
CICETTI
HEALTH CARE WRITER

to age 2 or longer.

“We already know that large-brained species develop more slowly, mature later and have longer lifespans, but what has not always been clear is why brains and life histories are related,” lead investigator and anthropology professor Robert Barton said. “One theory is that large brains increase lifespan by making the animal more generally flexible in its behavioral responses to unpredictable challenges.”

(I'm waiting for a study that explains why larger brains seem to lead to more self-destructive behavior.)

Contagious Itch

At Wake Forest Baptist Medical Center in North Carolina, researchers investigated the causes of contagious itch.

“It is conceivable that the neuronal networks or mechanisms underlying contagious itching may be similar to the ones involved in contagious yawning, a phenomenon that is still intensely studied, but not exactly clear,” dermatologist Dr. Gil Yosipovitch said in a medical center news release.

“The brain has such a powerful contribution to itch, and by understanding it, we may be able to develop future therapies that can target these areas and relieve the itch impulse,” he added.

The researchers said it was especially interesting to find that visually induced itch led to scattered, whole-body distribution of scratching.

(What I want to know is why I get an itch in an unreachable place in my back just as I'm going to sleep.)

If you would like to read more columns, you can order a copy of “How to be a Healthy Geezer” at www.healthygeezer.com.

Cicetti is a health care writer with more than 40 years of journalistic experience.

SENIOR MENU

Hot meals for people 60 or older are served at noon Monday through Friday at Koochiching County Senior Center, 307 Fourth St.

Meals are for anyone, regardless of income. A \$3.50 donation is suggested. Meals are subject to change. Participants under age 60 are welcome at \$6.50 each.

For reservations call 283-3460 the day before the meal. Cancellations may be made the day of the meal.

MONDAY

Chicken strips
Fresh potato wedges
Baked beans
Pudding with topping

TUESDAY

Open-face hot pork sand-

wiches
Gravy
Mashed potatoes
Slices beets
Whipped Jell-O

WEDNESDAY

Chicken pasta salad on lettuce leaf
Fresh fruit
Oatmeal fruit muffins

THURSDAY

Beef rice casserole
Tossed salad
Cream corn
Pineapple

FRIDAY

Sweet and sour pork
Brown rice
Green beans
Rosy applesauce

BIRTHS

The following births have been reported from La Verendrye General Hospital, Fort Frances.

Born to:

Heather and Trevor Armstrong, Fort Frances, a son, Jace Mathew Armstrong, 8 pounds, ounces, July 9, 2013.

Jason and Cherish Gervais, Fort Frances, a daughter, Avacyn Dimera Iommi Gervais, 9 pounds, July 9, 2013.

April Davis and Kyle DeGagne, Fort Frances, a son, Westyn Victor Darrell DeGagne, 7 pounds, 3 ounces, July 10, 2013.

Candace Marie Ernest, Devlin, Ontario, a daughter, Noemie Elissa Ernst, 9 pounds, 2 ounces, July 10, 2013.

MEMORIAM

Remembering **Pat Peterson** on her birthday, July 26.

We love you and miss you -

Ralph, kids and family

Upcoming
Tournament

41st
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