



Kevin Milaeger

Milaeger's

A Tomato Miracle?

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This has been an unusual and frustrating year in my tomato garden. I've talked to other gardeners, but no one seems to have the same problem that I have experienced. The problem(s) has been discussed in earlier blogs, but let me recap. The plants were set out around June 1st, in favorable weather. I used bagged soil in the 15-gallon pots, and fertilized regularly. The plants got off to a decent start, but when they were about 30" tall, the leaves and stems started twisting up in a way that was unfamiliar to me. Many plants were also stunted. I finally settled on "herbicide drift" as the most probable cause, but a source was never determined. Flower



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production, and therefore fruit, was also affected negatively. As the season wore on, I continued to research the problem but it was unproductive---



mini cucumbers

I was never confident in my assessment of the problem. The plants grew slowly, and produced some fruit, but not what I was expecting. Around mid-August I fertilized my plants again with a general fertilizer, and went away for a week or so. When I returned my plants looked nothing short of fantastic. You could have knocked me over with a cherry tomato. After a bit of light pruning (a normal late summer chore) I finally could be proud of the way they looked. The only

thing missing is the normally abundant fruit. During the ugly plant stage,

flowering was affected, so there is very little large fruit ready to pick. I do have some cherry tomatoes that have done well, but I was looking forward to making a BLT. That will have to wait.

The cucumbers that were planted in our garden at Milaeger's offices have really performed well. I planted three pots, with two or three seedlings in each pot. They were planted the first week of June. I prefer the mini cukes, those that should be picked when 5-6" long. They have very thin skin so don't need to be peeled. Plus, I use the



mini cucumbers

entire cuke at one time---no more mushy, leftover, half-cukes in the fridge. 'Mini Munch' and 'Manny' were the ones I tried this year, and the former was the most prolific. They both taste good, though. I believe I've picked close to 100 cukes so far, and the plants are still producing flowers.



multiple varieties of lettuce

Now is the time to plant your fall crop of greens. We have many varieties available, including five kinds of lettuce, two of kale, plus Swiss chard and broccoli. Planted now, they should produce for at least eight weeks. We will have a second crop in two weeks or so, so you can follow up with a succession

planting at that time to extend your fresh greens season even longer.

Don't forget Tomatomania is coming up soon---Saturday, September 9, at our Racine store. [Here is a link to the event details.](#) This is a free tomato tasting (well over 100 kinds!) along with some tasty tomato based treats and refreshing beverages that you can purchase. Come hungry!

Please email me (kevin@milaegers.com) if you have any questions or comments.



kale