



Kevin Milaeger

Milaeger's

My Tomato Garden Preview 2013!

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At the end of every tomato growing season I always try to make a few notes: the good, the bad, and so on. After further research and contemplation, I make a variety list for the following year. Around this time of year I decide to disregard most everything I decided and plant way more than I planned. Pretty much like all gardeners.

I plant mostly large tomatoes, but I do like to add a couple of early types, and those tend to have smaller fruit. Of the early types, my favorite for the past five years or so has been the heirloom variety 'Bloody Butcher.' It has fruit that is a bit larger than a golf ball, and is held in clusters. The skin is dark red, but the flesh is even darker. Tomato fanatics believe that most of the early tomatoes are inferior in taste to the



Bloody Butcher

larger, later varieties, and I concur. But 'Bloody Butcher' has superior flavor, the best of the early varieties, I think. It normally starts ripening in early July, if planted around June 1, and it bears well all summer.

In the cherry and grape tomato arena, I always come back to my favorite red cherry---'Sweet Baby Girl.' Every year I compare it to others, and it always comes out on top. It has the full tomato flavor, in bite sized fruit.



Although it is very sweet, it still has the "tomato tang." I'll grow at least one gold cherry variety, but I sometimes think that some of them are almost too sweet, if that is possible. This year I'll be growing 'Sun Gold.' Maybe I'll try serving it in



Cherokee Purple

a salad with 'Sweet Baby Girl,' and the two will complement each other.

Here are the larger fruited varieties I will be growing. 'Ananas Noire,' 'Ferris Wheel,' 'Hillbilly Potato Leaf,' 'Cherokee Purple,' 'Wisconsin 55,' 'Brandywine' (the original pink strain), 'Super Sioux,' 'Brandy Boy,' and 'Rose.' The first four are what some folks refer to as "novelty" varieties, but I consider them as staples. The last five are my preferred large red (or pink) tomatoes. To me, they are the best types for slicing. All of these are good producers and I haven't encountered any disease problems with them.

This list doesn't include the few new varieties that I want to try. I'll be choosing those from our list of "Vintage Veggie" plants. For those unfamiliar with that program, which is available only for a limited time (May 9-19), [here is a link](#). 'Green Envy,' 'Jasper,' 'Giant Valentine,' 'Black Krim,' and 'Box Car Willie' are the varieties that have caught my eye.

I also want to try a few of the grafted tomatoes. I discussed these in a previous blog ([click here](#).) I hope to be able to compare them to their non-grafted counterparts, but when all the tomatoes are ripening, it's hard to keep track of that information. Still, I like to start out the season with good intentions.



Ananas Noire

I plant my tomatoes the last week of May, if the weather forecast is favorable.

Remember, tomatoes need night temperatures to be above fifty degrees. Planting too early is unwise. If you plant too early, your crop will likely be further behind than if you had waited. I'm itching to plant, like everyone else, but I will wait. I figure with tomato planting time about a month away, I still have time to change my plans at least once more.

As always, please [email me](#) with any questions or comments.