



Kevin Milaeger

*Milaeger's*

## Summer Heat Means Fast Ripening

Kevin Milaeger

**Most every evening** I walk amongst my tomato plants, making sure all is well. I note how ripe the fruit is, waiting to pick it at just the right time. It's amazing how much the fruit ripens overnight. The morning after an evening check, there are often distinct changes. They don't go from green to red overnight, but changing from green to pink, or pink to red is very common. With the recent warm weather, the ripening is accelerated. From now on, I'll have 15-20 ripe fruit on the plants at any given time (not including cherry tomatoes.) I've already started giving away many to friends.



Tomato 'Buffalo Steak'

My peppers are faring well too. You recall that I planted quite a few plants in the garden, and those are

all doing fine---about ten bell peppers have been harvested off them so



Tomatoes

**Mushroom Basket (L), Cherokee Purple (R)**

far. Normally I like to wait for them to turn red, when they will be sweeter and more nutritious. But harvesting them when still green will force the plants to produce more flowers, so the later harvest should be larger. The three plants that I have in a single pot at home are doing even better than those in the ground. I haven't given them any special care. Of course, the soil

is different, and they have probably been watered a little more, but that's it. I'll continue watching them to see how they compare.

Many of you know that we offer early spring planting classes in our greenhouses, so our customers can experience a little spring before its time to plant most things outdoors. Attendees are supposed to pick up their pots or baskets by Memorial Day, but there are always a few stragglers. Last week I saw the last pot that someone forgot to pick up. It was from the "edibles" class. In the forgotten pot there is a cucumber plant that is monstrous. I didn't count the all flowers on it, but there must have been more than 300. I checked about fifty of them and found only a few female flowers. In other words, from all those flowers there will be very little fruit, since only the females are capable of producing fruit. Later, the percentage of female flowers usually increases. Some varieties of cukes have nearly all female flowers. The seed for these is very expensive so it is impractical for Milaeger's to sell them as plants, but we have offered some in our "Vintage Veggie" collection. These types of plants are parthenocarpic. This is a naturally occurring phenomenon, but it can also be created. Either way, it is not genetically modified. I am growing this type at home---you can find the seed in most seed catalogs (you generally don't see it on seed racks.)



**Tomato 'Florentine Yellow'**



**Pepper 'Big Bertha'**

Most of my radishes turned out pretty well this year, but one type never formed "bulbs." It was in a row right alongside others that were perfect. Naturally, I am blaming it on the seed, not on something I did. When I brought some of the good radishes indoors to add to my salad, I sliced one in half horizontally, so I had the top half and the bottom half. I ate the two halves separately and I was surprised that the bottom half was hotter than the top. I tried several more with the same result. Normally I pop the entire radish in my mouth so I never noticed this. Maybe it is unique to the variety I was growing---a round white radish called 'Ping Pong.' Incidentally, the radishes were picked at the correct time, before they bloomed, and before the radishes became pithy. Have any of you noticed this with your radishes?

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**cucumbers  
2 days after pollination**

In the greenhouse propagation area at Milaeger's, we have just sown the seed for our fall "greens to Grow" crop. These greens---lettuce,



**Radish 'Ping Pong'**

spinach, kale and others---will be ready for you to plant right around Labor Day. Plant then and you can enjoy fresh greens well into November, in most years. In early September there is generally plenty of room in the garden, as earlier crops such as onions have finished and you will have cleaned up those areas. The greens thrive in the cooler autumn weather.

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

