

# Seed Starting Tips & Tricks

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Here are some interesting seeds starting and vegetable growing tips. Compiled from the Totally Tomatoes catalog ([totallytomato.com](http://totallytomato.com)).

Tomato and pepper seeds germinate more consistently when soaked prior to sowing. Pre-soaking seeds for 8 hours, starting with warm water, initiates the germination process in virtually all seeds.



Tomato pollen becomes sterile in high temperatures, making fruit set difficult to impossible.

Cracking on tomatoes is mainly caused by rapid water absorption by the plants. Keep you plants consistently watered, mulch, and don't go from very dry to very wet.

Plants that produce a lot of flowers but few fruits can be caused by several factors. Poor or weak pollination can occur when plants are too close together, not thinned properly, temperatures are too high, it rains a lot or soil is too rich in nitrogen.



Pepper plants are susceptible to many of the same fungal diseases as tomato plants.

Cold night temps can cause pepper flowers to drop or prevent fruit set. Likewise, hot dry, conditions can cause flowers and newly set fruits to drop off.

High temperatures around the time of fruit set are usually responsible for misshapen peppers.

The hotter the pepper variety, the hotter the bottom heat should be for germination. Hot peppers contain high levels of capsaicin which can inhibit germination.

Capsaicinoid levels in peppers is what dictates the heat level of the pepper. When plants are grown in high temperatures and lean on water, capsaicin content increases making peppers taste hotter. The reverse is also true, cooler growing conditions and more water during the fruit development typically favors a more mild pepper flavor.

**There are 3 main factors to get consistently good seed germination:**



- Proper bottom temperature. Many seeds germinate with 70-75 degree bottom heat, but 80-85 degrees is best for tomato and pepper.
- Proper soil moisture. Pre-moisten mix and after sowing, cover trays with plastic to keep it moist.
- Oxygen –use a seed starting mix that offers proper oxygen for seeds. Potting soil is too dense.