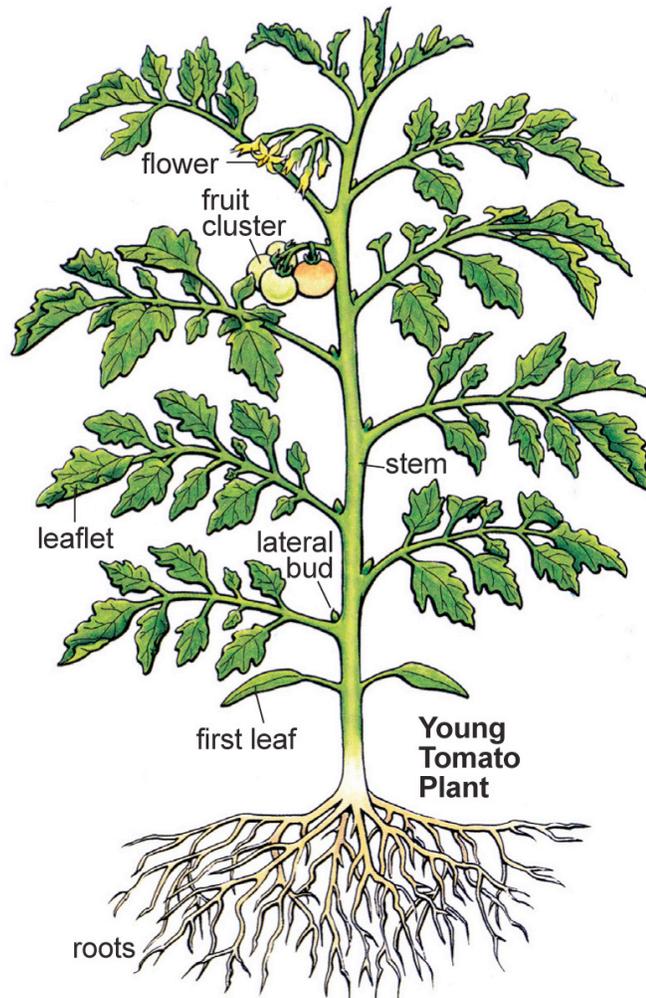


# Tomatoes



Adapted from: *Hot as a Pepper, Cool as a Cucumber*, Meredith Sayles Hughes, 1999.

## California's Major Tomato Production Regions

The main tomato-growing areas in California are shown in Figure 1 on the next page.

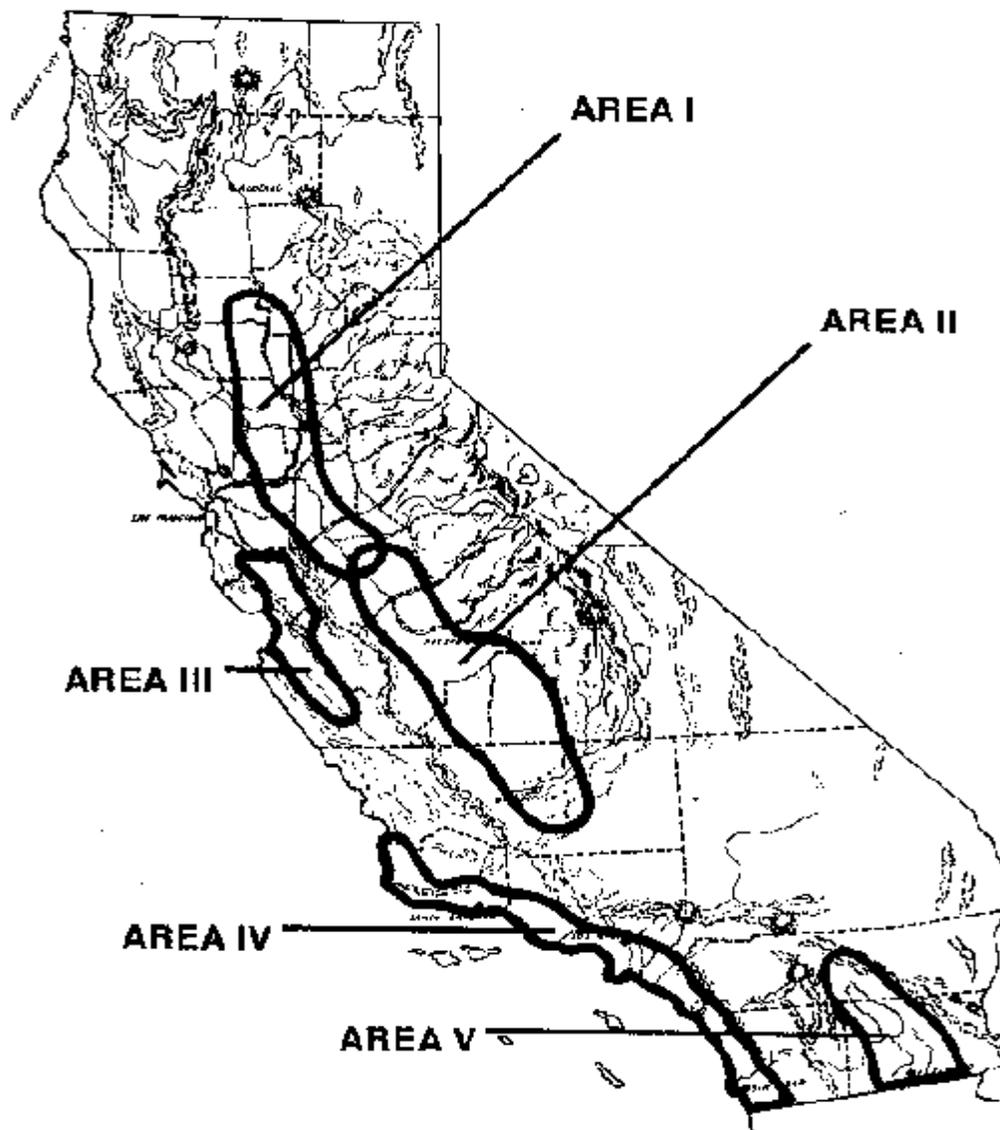
**Area I** grows about 60% of the state's processing tomatoes, centered in Yolo County. Planting of processing tomatoes extends from January to mid-June and tomatoes are harvested from July to early October.

**Area II**, the San Joaquin Valley south of Merced County produces 35 - 40% of the processing tomatoes. Planting takes place from January to early April and harvesting from June to August.

**Area III & Area IV**, the Central Coast and the South Coastal areas, produce primarily fresh market tomatoes with small amounts of processing tomatoes.

**Area V**, the Imperial Valley, produces several thousand acres of processing tomatoes. These are generally the first to be harvested in the state and are used to help start up and calibrate the processing plants.

## California's Major Tomato Production Regions



**Figure 1.** Major tomato producing areas in California.

Area I: Sacramento & San Joaquin Valleys to Merced

Area II: San Joaquin Valley from Merced South

Area III: Central Coast Valleys

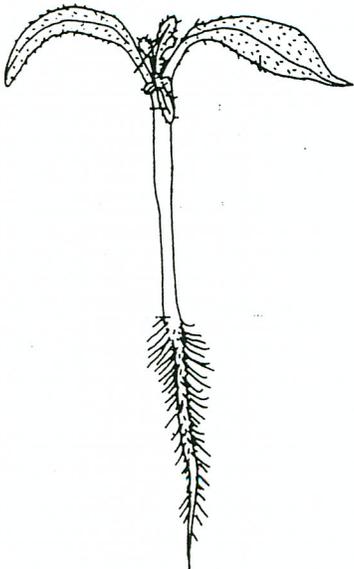
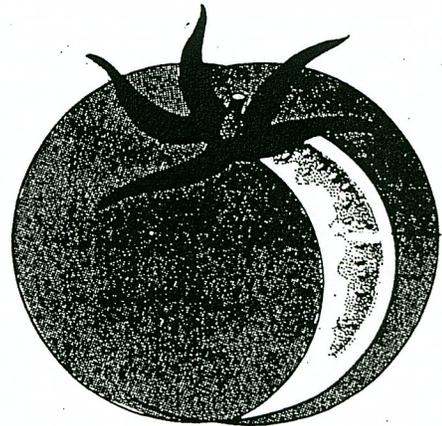
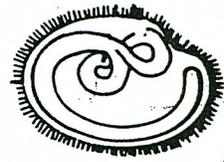
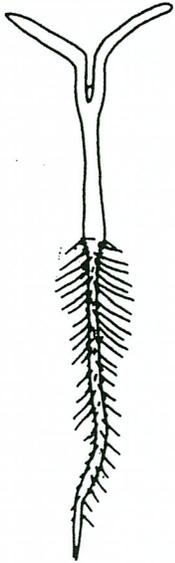
Area IV: Southern Coastal Area

Area V: Desert Valleys

*Reference: Integrated Pest Management for Tomatoes, 3<sup>rd</sup> Edn. UC Statewide Integrated Pest Management Program. Division of Agriculture and Natural Resources Publication #3274, 1990.*

## ***TOMATO: FACT or FICTION?***

- 1. Mexico is the largest producer of tomatoes in the world. **FICTION**** The United States is the largest producer of tomatoes in the world.
- 2. On average, every man, woman and child in the United States eats a total of 18 pounds of fresh tomatoes every year. **FACT****
- 3. On the average, every man, woman and child in the United States eats less than 50 pounds of processed tomatoes, such as in sauces, salsa, and ketchup. **FICTION**** Actually people eat a total of 70 pounds of processed tomatoes each year.
- 4. Tomatoes are actually a fruit. **FACT**** Botanically speaking they are the fruit of the plant because they contain seeds. Until the late 1800's, the tomato was classified as a fruit to avoid taxation, but this was changed after a Supreme Court ruling said that the tomato is a vegetable and should be taxed. Judge Justice Gray wrote in 1893: "Botanically speaking, tomatoes are fruits of a vine, just as are cucumbers, beans, and peas. But in the common language of the people ... all these are vegetables, which are grown in kitchen gardens, and which, whether eaten cooked or raw, are like potatoes, carrots, beets, lettuce, etc., usually served at dinner ... not like fruits, generally served as dessert."
- 5. Tomatoes have always been a popular food in the United States. **FICTION**** English settlers were reluctant to eat them because they thought tomatoes were poisonous. They didn't become a popular food until the last 1800's.
- 6. The tomato has relatives in its plant family that are poisonous. **FACT**** The tomato is a close relative to black nightshade that is a low branching plant with flowers similar to a tomato but which grows fruit the size of a berry that turns from green to purplish-black. Black nightshade grows in fields, ditches, around buildings, and in open woods and pastures. It doesn't taste good or have a good texture so animals don't usually eat it.
- 7. Tomatoes are native to the Americas. **FACT**** They were originally cultivated or grown by the Aztec and Incas in South America as early as 700 AD.
- 8. Tomatoes and potatoes are close members of the same plant family. **FACT**** They both belong to the Solanaceae (pronounced: So-lan-A-see-ee) family.
- 9. George Washington Carver, famous for developing 325 uses of peanuts, encouraged people to eat tomatoes. **FACT**** He strongly encouraged his poor Alabama neighbors to eat tomatoes in an effort to improve their vitamin-deficient diet.
- 10. The tomato doesn't contribute very much nutritional value to the human diet. **FICTION**** A University of California at Davis survey ranked the tomato as the single most important fruit or vegetable of western diets in terms of overall source of vitamins and minerals.
- 11. Tomatoes are a good source of vitamin C. **FACT****
- 12. Spanish explorers brought tomato seeds back to Spain and tomatoes quickly became popular in the Mediterranean countries of Spain, Portugal, and Italy. **FACT****
- 13. The first tomatoes that were cultivated or grown were very similar to those we eat today. **FICTION**** The original tomatoes were small berrylike fruits in clusters.
- 14. Tomatoes were once called "love apples." **FACT**** Because of their heart shape and red color they were thought to be an aphrodisiac and called "love apples."



***Seed***

***Tomato Time***

***Lesson 2. Tomato Plant Life Cycle***

***Young  
Seedling***

***Tomato***

***Older  
Seedling***

***Plant with Flowers***