

REMEMBER! – Tomato Blooms

If you look at your tomato plants in two to three weeks and scratch your head about the lack of fruit – remember July eleventh and twelfth and the days surrounding them! Why? Because heat is a real detriment to fruit set in tomatoes!

Temperatures that stay at 75 degrees F or above at night and daytime temperatures that rise above 95 degrees F (particularly when in combination with dry, hot winds) are perfect for causing poor fruit set on tomatoes. Temperatures this high do a couple of things. First, they can interfere with pollen viability. No pollen equals no fruit! Second, they can cause excessive growth that can also lead to a lack of pollination.

Recovery isn't immediate, either. In fact, it takes about three weeks for tomato flowers to develop into fruit large enough to notice that something is wrong. Add to that an additional week before tomatoes are full size and ready to ripen, and all of a sudden it's almost a month down the road that you note the lack of fruit! Fortunately, cooler temperatures will allow flowering to resume so fruit set can occur.

Combatting the heat can be a tough one. Anything that can be done to help cool the plants may help, but doing so can be very difficult. There are some varietal differences as well. 'Heat-set' tomatoes such as Florida 91, Sun Leaper and Sun Master do tend to have the ability to set fruit at temperatures two to three degrees higher than most other varieties, but even they will succumb to extreme temperature.