

Those rotten stinking tomatoes

By Kenneth Lent 9/26/12

Check this one out! No kidding, this works as I've experienced this method of boosting the health of heirloom tomato plants first hand.

Want to make heirloom tomato plants stronger and more disease and bug resistant naturally? I was told about this some 40 years ago by an elderly experienced gardener in my home town north of Pittsburgh, Pa. but never tried it until I again read about it online five years ago. Talk about a delayed reaction. ☺

Actually I had always just bought hybrid seeds packaged from a big company such as Burpee or other similar large garden seed company. That being the case, these plants are modified to produce big tomatoes with a heavy yield at harvest, and are genetically manipulated to be resistant to certain diseases and insects. However, as gardeners "in-the-know" will tell you: genetically modified plants that are not heirloom will not produce much if any fruit from plants grown from their seeds. Plus the seeds are chemically treated to begin with. So as far as having a future survival garden from home dried seeds, the store bought hybrid plants and/or seeds simply will not do. For survival garden planning, one has to go the route of growing heirloom "old time" garden plants that have not been genetically modified. The seeds from heirloom plants will produce full fruited plants generation after generation. I have some bean and corn heirloom plants which seeds go back some 100 years of gardening, and they just keep on growing and going!

There are some drawbacks about heirloom plants however that must be taken into consideration. First of all they don't produce as much fruit as the store bought plants or seeds which are also hybrids bred for a bigger yield. Secondly, heirloom plants are more sensitive to correct sprouting, transplanting, and growing them successfully once in your garden due to mold or insect attacks upon them. In other words, heirlooms take a lot more care than do the modern store bought hybrid varieties. However, they will provide a food strain that has not been "tinkered with" by genetic science, and they will give you seeds that will grow you repeated plentiful food gardens year after year. But there is a way to make your heirloom tomato plants a much stronger plant all the way around by implementing a natural process. (I have not tried this with plants other than tomatoes, as of yet)

To improve the general strength of your heirloom tomato plants, so that they are more resistant to molds and bug attacks, all you need to do is rot the seeds in their own juice before drying them for next year's planting.

Here is what I have done with my tomato plants for the last five years which has caused them to be noticeably healthier and more resistant to bug attacks, plus producing more and bigger tomatoes on the vines.

In the Fall, I look for the biggest and greenest plant, then I let the largest three tomatoes ripen on that vine until they are overly ripe and ready to drop off on their own. Then I pick these to be my “seed tomatoes” for next year by slicing them open and scraping all the seeds into a ceramic or stainless steel pot. (You’ll get plenty of seeds from just a few tomatoes) Fill the pot with a pint of water and swish the brew gently around with your fingers to help the seeds separate from the little pulp that will be attached to them. (Put about a tablespoon of smashed tomato pulp in too so that it ferments the water) Next just set this seed brew aside in a room temperature place to have it rot of its own juices. This will “train” the seeds to withstand bacteria environments by building a natural immunity. Gently swirl the brew for a few seconds once a day. Five or six days will do the trick but the mess will be stinking by then so we’ll need to find a place in a back room or laundry room where it won’t be a bother.

After the juice has fermented for five or so days the seeds will all be on the bottom. Just pour off the top water slowly. The seeds can then be scooped out with a spoon. Most people like to dry their seeds on a paper towel. But I have found that if you simply strain the seeds and place them on a plate (separate the seeds) to dry, then you don’t have seeds that are stuck to paper when dried. They will just scrape off the plate a lot easier than trying to pick them off of stuck paper. Some people like drying seeds on a piece of window screen for air circulation, but I’ve had no problems using a plate and placing it on an out of the way shelf inside. Once the seeds are completely dried they can be placed in an envelope and kept in a cool dry place for next Spring’s planting. It’s best to let them dry for a few weeks to make sure they are bone dry before storing.

I have done this process with my heirloom tomato plants for five years now, and I can see a notable difference in the plants compared to the first year. The first year I had some serious trouble with molds and gnats wiping out about a third of the plants. This year I have not had to use any type of insect repellent (commercial or natural) but only kept weeds and grasses cleared out of the garden so that less bugs were in the area. All the plants were strong with more and bigger tomatoes than the previous years. I still did have to hand pick off some of those nasty big green caterpillars but had no real problem with them if I just scanned the plants each day visually. In retrospect, I had noticed an improvement in the hardiness of these heirlooms even in the second season using this process. They are now well on the way to being a great survival garden tomato plant. This method has turned out to be well worth the small effort and time in tending to the good health of my favorite tomato plants. I would encourage the readers to try experimenting along these lines and hopefully have the same success. See how it works and pass it on to others. It worked great for my plants. Pictures below:

Here is the fermenting tomato seed water at three days



Below, the seeds are now drying on a Corningware plate (room temperature)

