



EDIBLE
GARDENING
SERIES



www.windmillgarden.com

16009 60th Street East, Sumner, WA 98390
(253) 863-5843

WINDMILL
& Gardens



Open Pollinated, Heirloom and Hybrid Tomatoes

Open-pollinated or hybrid? A hybrid seed comes from a *cross between two different varieties*. **Hybrids** may be bred to be more widely adapted to environmental stresses such as heat, cold, disease or drought. They have more uniform characteristics than non-hybrids, making crops more predictable in quality. Sometimes hybrids can be made to produce earlier or higher yields, have higher germination rates or more cold tolerance. But hybrids do not "breed true." What this means to the home gardener is that *reliable seed cannot be saved from hybrid plants*. Seed for hybrid varieties must be purchased year after year from the seed companies or nurseries, unless you want to gamble and grow an array of offspring.

An **open-pollinated or heirloom** variety holds on to the parents' characteristics generation after generation. Most lettuce, bean and pea varieties for home gardeners are open-pollinated, while most cabbages, broccoli, tomato, cucumbers, melons and Brussels sprouts are hybrids. Standard, or open pollinated varieties are more or less stabilized in their characteristics. They remain fairly consistent, *producing seed that will grow into plants more or less like their parent plants*, though less uniform than hybrids.

Heirloom tomatoes intrigue home gardeners. Heirloom tomatoes offer better flavor than hybrids, both university horticulturalists and heirloom fans agree. While few are suitable for commercial shipping or chain supermarket display, home gardeners sing the praises of heirlooms, and farmer's markets and boutique grocers provide a commercial outlet for them. They also provide greater genetic diversity than hybrids, with potential for superior evolved resistance to diseases and pests. Heirloom tomatoes feature juicy, soft, flavorful, thin-skinned and sometimes lumpy-looking fruits in colors including red, pink, yellow, gold, black, purple and white.

