

Tomato, Tree—*Cyphomandra betacea* (Cav.) Sendt.¹

James M. Stephens²

Advertisements appear quite often in newspapers extolling the merits of the tree tomato. It is not a true tomato, but is a perennial shrub 6–10 feet high, having large, 5 inch long, heart-shaped, hairy leaves. The fruit looks more like a small eggplant than a tomato. It is 2–3 inches long, oval in shape, smooth, and long stemmed. The mature fruit has soft, red skin and contains many small seeds.

Culture

Tree tomato is grown in Florida in gardens and around the house, and does best in frost-free locations. It is grown widely in South America, especially Peru and Brazil.

It begins blooming 2 years after seeding. Fruit production declines sharply after 5 to 6 years. The time required from bloom to mature fruit is about 3 months. Plants are easily propagated from seed, but also may be started from cuttings. It has been slow to produce fruit in Gainesville trials, but has produced fairly well in Dade County.

Gardeners often advertise seed for sale in seed exchange bulletins, and it is listed by seed and plant companies.



Figure 1. Tomato tree.

Credits: James M. Stephens, UF/IFAS

1. This document is HS679, one of a series of the Horticultural Sciences Department, UF/IFAS Extension. Original publication date May 1994. Revised September 2015. Reviewed October 2018. Visit the EDIS website at <http://edis.ifas.ufl.edu>.

2. James M. Stephens, professor emeritus, Horticultural Sciences Department; UF/IFAS Extension, Gainesville, FL 32611.

The Institute of Food and Agricultural Sciences (IFAS) is an Equal Opportunity Institution authorized to provide research, educational information and other services only to individuals and institutions that function with non-discrimination with respect to race, creed, color, religion, age, disability, sex, sexual orientation, marital status, national origin, political opinions or affiliations. For more information on obtaining other UF/IFAS Extension publications, contact your county's UF/IFAS Extension office.

U.S. Department of Agriculture, UF/IFAS Extension Service, University of Florida, IFAS, Florida A & M University Cooperative Extension Program, and Boards of County Commissioners Cooperating. Nick T. Place, dean for UF/IFAS Extension.