



Grow the Crop

Handout 20

Training of Vegetable Crop

TRAINING VEGETABLE CROPS / HYDROPONICS TOMATO

As a second example of training techniques, tunnel grown tomatoes is discussed. Very few tools are used here.

Tunnel tomatoes are indeterminate growers. This means that they can grow and produce fruit continuously over an extended time. Tomato follow a sympodial growth model, which means that after the juvenile growth phase has terminated, the apical meristem terminates in an inflorescence.

For the plant to continue growing, the axillary bud of the terminal leaf produces two to three leaves before it also terminates in an inflorescence. The next axillary will continue to grow in a similar manner.

This process of the sprouting bud, formation of two to three leaves and an inflorescence, will continue indefinitely if the plant remains healthy and protected from unfavourable conditions.

To prevent plants from becoming too dense, the lateral shoots are removed, using either pruning shares or pruning knives. The tools must be kept sterile during the process. In this way the single, remaining stem becomes very long and needs to be supported. Often two stems will be developed from a single plant. The simplest method used for support is using wire or specialised thread that is anchored in the ground. The loose end of the stay wire is spun around the stem being supported. Wires are spun at a suitable height inside the tunnel, onto which the stems are anchored. As the plants grow, the anchors are disengaged from the wires, and the stems layered just above soil levels, reducing the plant mass that is required to be kept up.