



SEPTEMBER–OCTOBER / BEFORE THE FIRST FROST

Bring them in.

How to ripen green tomatoes indoors: a UK autumn guide

Cold nights will slow the ripening on the plant, and frost will ruin the fruit. Green tomatoes picked at the right stage will finish ripening indoors. Sort them first, then choose a method.

Which tomatoes will ripen?

- **Full-sized, mature green fruit have the best chance.** Choose the lighter, glossier green, sometimes with a pale or yellowish blush.
- **Small, hard, deep-green fruit are immature** and will rarely ripen. Use them for chutney or compost.
- **Set aside any split, bruised or marked fruit;** they will rot quickly and can spoil the neighbouring fruit.

When should I pick them?

Bring in what is left before the first frost. Once nights are regularly below about 10°C, outdoor fruit ripens very slowly on the plant, so there is little to gain by waiting. Pick on a dry day and handle the fruit gently. [Check the frost risk near you with GrowGuide's postcode weather advice.](#)

What about the windowsill?

A windowsill suits the last day or two. A tomato that is already colouring can finish there. Green fruit left on a sunny sill for long tends to grow a tougher skin, and strong sun can overheat it. Check it daily so it doesn't spoil.

The simple method

Lay sound fruit in a single layer, not touching, in a tray or shallow box. Keep it at room temperature, roughly 18–21°C, out of direct sunlight. Tomatoes do not need light to ripen. Check every two or three days, remove anything soft or mouldy, and take fruit out as it colours.

Does a banana help?

Ripening fruit give off ethylene, a natural gas that triggers ripening. Tomatoes make their own, and a ripe banana or apple will add more to the environment. This is optional: put the tomatoes in a cardboard box with one ripe banana. Cover the box, but make a few air holes so air can circulate and moisture can escape. Replace the banana when it goes over.

How long does it take?

Often a couple of weeks for mature fruit in a warm room. Less mature fruit, or a cooler room, can take three or four weeks or more. Not every tomato will make it.

Common mistakes

- Putting green tomatoes in the fridge. Below about 10°C they stop ripening and the texture suffers.
- Leaving them to bake on a hot, sunny windowsill.
- Expecting every small green tomato to ripen.
- Piling fruit up, so rot spreads where you can't see it.

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