

11

Pruning, Staking, Tying

Producing container-size plants was thoroughly covered in the previous chapter. There are two special factors which are closely associated with growing large-size plants in containers which will be discussed in this chapter. These factors were omitted previously for fear of confusing the reader. The two factors are (1) pruning off suckers and (2) staking and tying grown plants in large-size containers.

Suckers and Pruning

Tomato plants produce suckers at all stages of growth. Above every leaf node (the place where a leaf is attached to the stem) is a bud which is called a "sucker." When the plants are small and the older leaves are pinched off the first or second time, the suckers are barely visible and are usually not noticed. After the plants are shifted to 4-inch pots, the suckers are usually large enough to be seen. In gallon containers, the plants and the suckers grow more rapidly than they previously did.

All suckers should be pruned from the plants as early as possible. This can be done either by rubbing them off by hand or by cutting them off with a knife. But remove only the suckers! *Do not* cut off the leaves or the flower buds.