



Japanese Tomato Ring (JTR)

by King Happney, Master Gardener

I will share with you how to grow delicious tomatoes in a small garden plot with a Japanese tomato ring.

All you need to grow tomatoes with the Japanese tomato ring is a 6' x 6' plot of land, prepared soil, balanced fertilizer, road mesh, a sunny spot, and an

adequate water supply.

The 1st step is to get an approximately 15 to 16 feet length of road mesh (concrete reinforcing wire) or wire fencing, about 3' to 5' wide. If you don't know someone in the construction industry, you can purchase it from a hardware or home improvement store. Bring the ends of the wire together to make a circle. I usually have a diameter of approximately 4 feet. When making the circle you want to be sure not to leave any sharp ends of the wire cage exposed. The ends can give you a pretty bad cut so be sure to cap or tape them.

Next prepare the 6 by 6 plot of soil. Turn the soil down about 8 to 10 inches, then smooth the soil with your rake. After smoothing out the soil I take my ring and make an indentation of where it will sit. Then I lay the ring to the side. Now place 4 to 6 inches of compost on top of the soil. Sprinkle approximately 1 cup of balanced fertilizer on the pile. Next add a quarter cup of dolomite lime. Then add a 6 to 8 inch layer of mulch. Repeat this application until the pile is approximately 2 feet high. Make a depression in the center of the pile. This is how you will water the plants once they are established. Now add another cup of fertilizer to the center of the pile and water thoroughly.

Place the ring over the prepared pile and anchor it down with tent pegs. Or as I do, use guide wires made of thick cord to tie the ring down in four places since there are some strong winds in thunderstorms and cold fronts. Now plant 4 or 5 tomato plants of your choice, evenly placed around the outside of the ring about 1 to 2 inches from this ring. Cover around the plants with a 3 inch thick layer of mulch. Water the plants every day for the first week. Keep the leaves dry by watering at the base of the plants. Add compost to the inside of the ring as the compost decomposes and drops. As your tomato plants grow and become heavy, tie their stems and branches to the ring's wire to give them support.

I always have planted a couple of basil and oregano plants around the ring in between the tomato plants. I seem to have very little trouble with insects or pests.

In conclusion all you need to grow delicious tomatoes is a properly prepared garden plot, a Japanese tomato ring, a sunny location, and adequate water.

