



## **Preventing Catfacing in Tomatoes in Colorado**

Tomatoes are a beloved crop for many gardeners and farmers due to their versatility and delicious flavor. However, one common problem that can affect tomato plants is known as catfacing. This condition can reduce the quality and yield of your tomato harvest.

Fortunately, there are several steps you can take to prevent catfacing and promote healthy tomatoes. In this article, we will explore some effective strategies to minimize the occurrence of catfacing in your tomato plants.

### **Select Appropriate Tomato Varieties:**

Choosing the right tomato variety is crucial in preventing catfacing. Some tomato varieties are more prone to this condition than others. Opt for varieties that are known to be less susceptible to catfacing, such as 'Celebrity,' 'Better Boy,' or 'Sun Gold.' Research and select varieties that have a reputation for producing consistently shaped fruit.

### **Provide Consistent and Adequate Watering:**

Inconsistent watering practices can contribute to catfacing. Tomato plants require consistent moisture levels to develop healthy fruit. Erratic watering, especially irregular periods of drought followed by heavy watering, can lead to catfacing. Maintain a regular watering schedule, ensuring that the soil remains evenly moist but not waterlogged. Using mulch around the plants can help retain moisture and regulate soil temperature.

### **Proper Soil Preparation and Fertilization:**

Prepare the soil adequately before planting your tomatoes. Ensure that it is well-draining, rich in organic matter, and has a balanced nutrient content. Conduct a soil test to determine the pH level and nutrient deficiencies, if any. Adjust the soil pH as needed, and provide appropriate fertilization based on the test results. Excessive nitrogen fertilization can contribute to catfacing, so avoid overfeeding your plants.

### **Avoid Temperature Extremes:**

Extreme temperature fluctuations can trigger catfacing in tomatoes. Both excessively hot and cold temperatures during the flowering and fruit-setting stages can disrupt pollination and lead to catfacing. To mitigate this, consider providing shade or using protective covers during hot spells. Likewise, you can use row covers or other protective measures to shield plants from cold temperatures, especially during early spring or late fall.

### **Prune and Support Tomato Plants:**

Proper pruning and supporting techniques can help reduce the likelihood of catfacing. Prune your tomato plants to remove excessive foliage, allowing better air circulation and light penetration. This practice helps maintain optimal growing conditions and reduces stress on the plant. Additionally, provide sturdy support for your tomato plants using cages, stakes, or trellises. Supporting the plants helps prevent branches from bending and fruit from coming into contact with the ground, reducing the risk of catfacing.