

## TOMATO TALK FOR ABG 02/11/14

Growing Tomatoes in Alameda- challenges and solutions...

### 1) Sandy soil-

- a. Low water holding capacity and low cation exchange capacity
- b. Water- in order to dry farm tomatoes here (as our farm does, you need to plan ahead- compost/ amend soil over the winter, early planting to take advantage of ground moisture, transplant large plants and get them deep)
- c. Cation exchange capacity- what does this mean in laymen's terms?
  - i. **Cation-exchange capacity** (CEC) is the maximum quantity of total cations, of any class, that a soil is capable of holding, at a given pH value, available for exchange with the soil solution. CEC is used as a measure of fertility, nutrient retention capacity (Wikipedia). Some common cations include: Ammonium, **Potassium**, Magnesium and **Calcium**.
  - ii. Some basic amendments to keep your tomatoes healthy (especially calcium to prevent blossom end rot)
    1. AZOMITE, oyster shell, compost (increase humus), granite, greensand or wood ash

### 2) Temperature-

- a. Our days are often warm and sunny enough (high fog can be an issue, but we are not in the golden gate fog path) Our main issues are the cool nights which often drop near or below 50 degrees...
- b. Our solution at Farm2Market is to use a warming and insulating ground cover- for us, landscaping fabric such as Dewitt pro weed barrier
  - i. Last a long time and can be reused, keeps weeds back, warms soil, insulates soil moisture and acts as mulch, speeds incorporation of compost and organic materials.

### 3) Cultural Methods-

- a. There are many ways to trellis tomatoes, but by all means, DO IT. While you may see large central valley farms dry farming tomatoes and letting them trail across the ground, these are often processing tomatoes that are machine harvested while green and ripened with ethylene out of the field.
- b. If you want vine ripened tomatoes (which you do) you must keep them up off of the ground, away from the soil, and out of the direct midday/afternoon sun.
- c. Different trellis options depending on your number of plants
- d. Brief intro to the Florida weave (which we use at Farm2Market)
- e. Brief intro to pruning tomatoes (taming while avoiding sunscald)