

From The Bedford Extension Master Gardener HELP DESK

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WHAT'S A CHEROKEE PURPLE?

QUESTION

Sometimes, you simply cannot make this stuff up!

A few years ago a lady called the Bedford Extension Help Desk with the following question:
"I planted purple tomato seeds. When will they turn purple?"

DIAGNOSIS / RECOMMENDATION

The diagnosis was that the client had planted Cherokee Purple tomato seeds. The Cherokee Purple tomato (*Solanum lycopersicum*) is a variety that at maturity is a "reddish purple" with green shoulders; not a true dark purple.



tomato seedling / flickr.com

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

According to various articles I read in researching this article, Cherokee Purple tomatoes are an 'Heirloom' variety, which originated in Tennessee. They are thought to have been passed down from Native Americans of the Cherokee Tribe.



Cherokee Purple Tomatoes / pinterest.com

Cherokee Purples are indeterminate growers that produce large, deep "dusky purple-pink" and red beefsteak tomatoes. The fruit itself can weigh approximately one pound, is prized for its sweet taste, and is a favorite for sandwiches or in salads. It is a vigorous grower that benefits from strong staking or caging in order to get the vines/fruits above the ground. Even then, this particular variety seems to very prone to various types of diseases including blights, mildew, and leaf spot. [1] [2] [3]

More information on tomatoes in general, and growing tomatoes specifically, can be found in two VCE publications, both titled "Tomatoes" (see resource links #4 and #5 below).

For additional information, go to websites listed in Resources Links below.



Cherokee Purple Tomato / Tomato obsessed!
[pinterest.com](https://www.pinterest.com)

RESOURCE LINKS

- [1] <https://bonnieplants.com/product/cherokee-purple-heirloom-tomato/>
- [2] <http://www.heirloom-organics.com/guide/va/1/guidetogrowingcherokeepurple.html>
- [3] <http://www.rareseeds.com/cherokee-purple-tomato/>
- [4] <http://offices.ext.vt.edu/westmoreland/programs/anr/documents/tomatoes.pdf>
- [5] https://pubs.ext.vt.edu/426/426-418/426-418_pdf.pdf

All resource links accessed, June 22, 2016

Answers provided herein were based on specific situations and growing conditions.

These recommendations may or may not be appropriate for all circumstances.

For specific recommendations for your particular situation please contact your local Cooperative Extension Office.

MASTER GARDENER HELP DESK

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