

## **Gardener's Notebook**

### **Upside Down Tomatoes**

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Probably one of the dumbest things I've tried! This growing a plant up-side down! But that's the latest fad and I had to try it. Besides, I needed something to write about.

At Murdock's they had plans for planting and growing a tomato in a bucket—up-side down—all the instructions:

“Step one: get a 5-gallon pail, put a hole in the bottom. The plastic pail is sturdier and will hold moisture better than the commercially made containers,” they stated. Have you ever tried putting a hole in the bottom of a heavy plastic pail? Not easy! I resorted to the cork screw to make an initial hole, then with the grapefruit knife cut a somewhat round hole.

“Step two: obtain a tomato plant at least four inches tall” I selected a Sweet 100 thinking the smaller sized fruit wouldn't tend to break the branches as would a plant that produced the large tomatoes. “Thread the leaves down through the hole with only a few leaves sticking out.” Easy enough, I thought, until I tried it. Finally I carefully wrapped the leaves with a piece of paper, squeezing it as tight as possible, and wedged it down through that small opening. The Sweet 100 came through with only minor injuries.

“Step three: put soil in around the clump of dirt holding the roots.” I certainly couldn't put the bucket in an up right position, so I carefully laid it on its side. Holding the root ball in one hand, I began scooping soil in under the root ball, until it was resting peacefully on a mound in the center of the bucket. Being careful not to break the stem, more soil was added in and around the root ball and the stem, until the bucket was about  $\frac{3}{4}$  full.

“Step four: hang the bucket from a very sturdy branch or pole, and water well.” My clothesline pole seemed the perfect place—the end right outside my office window. Being very careful to hold the bucket high enough so as not to break the Sweet 100's stem, I hoisted it up and onto the

pole. The bail on the bucket bent a little under the weight—I wondered if it would hold. I could tell that the little tomato plant was also worried. What if that big bucket would fall with her right underneath? I doused the soil with water, the bail of the bucket bending even more. Hanging there the little Sweet 100 plant looked pretty pathetic! Oh, well, I reasoned, it'll get used to it. After all this is what it should look like.

Every morning for about a week I watched that little plant hanging out there. Finally my aching heart could take it no longer and I cut it down. Just like a prisoner who had committed no crime, Sweet 100 seemed so relieved—I could hear her sigh a hearty “Thank you!”

She now lives in the greenhouse next to her peers, growing in an up-right position, just as tomatoes were intended to do. After all, plant leaves grow up and the roots grow down—one of Mother Nature's rules! No more of the fad stuff for me! Hanging up-side down, for pity sakes, who ever thought that would be a good idea?