

**DISCOVER HOW TO IMPROVE
TOMATO FRUIT QUALITY
FROM MSU EXTENSION BULLETIN**

EAST LANSING, Mich. -- Whether they pronounce it “to-MAY-to” or “to-MAH-to,” consumers want firm, attractive-looking produce.

Tomato growers and home gardeners can learn how to reduce fruit cracks and other defects in “Optimizing Fruit Quality in Fresh Market Tomato” (E-2927), a new bulletin offered by Michigan State University (MSU) Extension.

The bulletin focuses on reducing fruit cracking and shoulder check defect, an imperfection that involves multiple tiny, parallel cracks on the fruit’s shoulder, the curved portion at the top of a tomato. It also describes techniques used to enhance fruit color.

The bulletin authors, Sieg Snapp, associate professor of horticulture, and Jinsheng Huang, former postdoctoral researcher, explain how tomato variety, cultural management practices and seasonal weather can affect fruit quality and appearance.

“Fruit quality issues are plaguing commercial tomato growers and home gardeners,” Snapp said. “High quality fruit is the secret to long-lasting fruit, maintaining nutrition and market appeal all the way from the field to the consumer’s table.

“Consumers buy with their eyes, and if they see color problems or cracks in the fruit, they won’t buy,” she adds. “That’s why a large percentage of fruit never gets sold.”

“Optimizing Fruit Quality in Fresh Market Tomato” costs \$1.50 and is available for purchase online from the MSU Extension Educational Materials Distribution Center at www.emdc.msue.msu.edu/ or from any county MSU Extension office.

Project GREEN (Generating Research and Extension to meet Environmental and Economic Needs), the state’s plant agriculture initiative at MSU, funded Snapp and Huang’s tomato quality research.

Project GREEN is a cooperative effort between plant-based commodities and businesses together with the Michigan Agricultural Experiment Station, MSU Extension and the Michigan

Department of Agriculture to advance Michigan's economy through its plant-based agriculture. Its mission is to develop research and educational programs, ensure and improve food safety, and protect and preserve the quality of the environment in response to industry needs.