

The 'Wailing and Warrior' Kewalo Tomato

Prepared by: Kitty Courtney, Master Gardener Class of 2015

This uniform ripening determinate variety bred at University of Hawaii by tomato breeder Dr. Jim Gilbert was named after one of his favorite fishing spots, Kewalo Basin. It is not known if he was also aware of the Native Hawaiian meaning of the place named Kewalo, located on the southern shore of Oahu and translated as the "place of wailing." Kewalo was the place where the Kauwa, a very low class of servants, were drowned by holding their heads under water. Kewalo was also the nesting-ground of the owl who was the cause of a battle between the owls and the King Kakuhihewa. The owls from Kauai to Hawaii gathered together and defeated the forces of the King.



Plant Details

Genus	Lycopersicon
Species	esculentum
Variety	Kewalo
Planting Zone	12
Days to Maturity	75 – 80
Fruit Color	Red
Habit	Upright
Plant Height	12 in - 15 in
Light Requirements	Full Sun
Moisture Requirements	Moist, well-drained
Resistance	Disease Resistant, Heat Tolerant, Humidity Tolerant, Pest Resistant

Kewalo is a determinate tomato plant with uniform ripening that matures in 75-80 days. Red round fruits are 6 to 8 ounces and sweet. Kewalo was bred to be resistant to fusarium wilt, gray leaf spot, one strain of spotted wilt virus, and root knot nematode. It is considered the only open-pollinated variety that can boast of these traits. The Kewalo is a good choice for hot and humid climates.

Seedlings can be raised individually in cell trays or pots and transplanted 3–5 weeks after sowing. Plants can be supported by circular cages 3–6 feet high and 16–18 inches in diameter made with 6 x 6 inch mesh hog fencing or construction wire. Tall cages should be secured by a couple of stakes pounded into the ground. Seedlings should be spaced 15 inches apart in rows 24–30 inches apart. Plant tomato seedlings with part of the stem buried along with the root ball. Additional roots will develop along the buried stem portion. Dig a small trench 6 inches long by 4 inches deep, lay one seedling in the trench at a slight angle with several inches of the top of the seedling above the ground, then bury the roots and lower portion of the stem. As the plant grows, train it to

grow into the wire mesh for support. Plants can be pruned or left unpruned. Pruning involves removing the side shoots arising from the leaf axils and leaving only the central shoot. One or two additional side shoots can be left unpruned to grow out of the lower part of the main stem for additional yield. Seeds of tomato cultivars developed by UH-CTAHR are available from the CTAHR Agricultural Diagnostic Service Center Seed Lab on the UH Manoa campus and from some garden stores.

Hawaii Planting Trials

Kewalo tomato seeds were planted at the Urban Garden Center in Pearl City on Feb 20 and kept in the shaded seedling nursery. Sprouts emerged between March 6 and 13. Three of the seedlings were outplanted on April 10. A glitch in the automatic watering system resulted in the death of one seedling (the 'wailing' Kewalo observed on April 24, albeit by drought not drowning) and replanted on May 1, given consistent watering and is growing along with the other two seedlings (the 'warrior' Kewalos). Still, the overall slow growth of the second outplanting is likely due to poor soil preparation and insufficient watering. While we were informed that the soil in the garden had been prepared for planting, it was very hard. It was also difficult to loosen the soil within the small radius of the hole in the soil cover material. A deeper hole with soil conditioning would have probably promoted better growth. Deep watering could only be conducted once a week, however, the very hot conditions in Pearl City most likely required additional watering for these seedlings to flourish.



Kewalo tomato plant, May 15, second outplanting

References

- www.tomatogrowers.com/KEWALO/productinfo/4630/
- <http://www.ctahr.hawaii.edu/seed/seeds.asp>
- <http://www.sacred-texts.com/pac/hloh/hloh06.htm>
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