



## Plant Village: an Online Solution for Crop Questions

What do you do when your food crops suffer from pests, disease, or environmental stress? Do you grab a seed catalog or reference book off the shelf, check the internet, contact the agricultural extension, or ask a gardener friend?

We recently discovered a new way to find out information about food producing plants. **Plant Village**, an interactive website, offers detailed information about crops along with the opportunity to post photos and questions.

The website, developed by two Penn State Professors, is set up as a forum where people can exchange knowledge about food plants. As of August 2014, the site had more than a half million users from around the world, and thousands of well written and detailed entries on food crops and diseases.

A screenshot of the Plant Village website. The top navigation bar is blue and contains the PlantVillage logo, an "Ask a Question" button, a search box, and "Sign up" and "Log in" links. The main content area shows a question titled "When to move tomatoes to the garden" with a "Tomato" tag and "None Given" location. The question text asks when to move tomato plants into the garden. It was posted by Fred Johnson (3 points) on February 1, 2013. There are 0 comments. Below the question, under the "Answers" section, there is one answer with 3 points. The answer discusses hardening off plants and the importance of gradual exposure to sunlight. On the right side, there is a "Plant Library" sidebar with a scrollable list of plant names starting with 'A', including Alfalfa, Almond, Aloe vera, Amaranth, Anise, Apple, Apricot, Artichoke, Arugula, Asparagus, Avocado, and Azolla.

*A screenshot of the Plant Village site.*

Simple and clear formatting makes the website easy to use; it's easy to access relevant information quickly. The material is accessible to anyone, regardless of user status, and you are welcome to **sign up as a user** for no cost in order to post questions. Other gardeners, extension officers, professors, small farmers, and more answer questions, and the best response is voted to the top of the list.

For an easy way to quickly access information about lots of crops, or to share knowledge you've learned from your gardening experience, try out Plant Village!