

## Guide to Hardening Off Tender Plants



What is 'hardening off'?

- The process of acclimating plants that were started in a greenhouse (or otherwise climate controlled setting) to the fluctuating, harsher conditions of outside growing

Why do I need to harden off my tender plants?

- While your plant is very healthy, it is not very strong yet. It has not experienced the harsh sun, aggressive winds, and quickly fluctuating temperatures we experience in Colorado.
- Hardening off is like strength training for your plants—you need to expose them to their new growing environment gradually so that they do not die from shock.

Steps for hardening off:

1. Water your plant. Put your plant outside in the sun for 3 hours when the temperatures are above 60 degrees for the duration of those 3 hours. Then bring them back inside or to a more protected area. Check the soil moisture and water again if need be. Do this 3 hour interval for 3 days.
2. Water your plant. Put your plant outside in the sun for 4 hours when the temperatures are above 60 degrees for the duration of those 4 hours. Then bring them back inside or to a more protected area. Check the soil moisture and water again if need be. Do this 4 hour interval for 4 days.
3. Water your plant. Put your plant outside in the sun for 5 hours when the temperatures are above 60 degrees for the duration of those 5 hours. Then bring them back inside or to a more protected area. Check the soil moisture and water again if need be. Do this 5 hour interval for 7 days.
4. Your plant should be sufficiently strengthened by this point. Now you can leave your plant outside all day. Water your plant in the morning to give it a head start for the day and to prevent as much wilting as possible throughout the course of the day. Be sure to check the state of your plant in the evening as well and give it a drink at the end of hot days.

Please be aware:

- Here at Rick's Garden Center, we DO NOT recommend planting tender plants (such as tomatoes, annuals flowers, etc.) outside in the ground before May 10th. Even if your plant has been hardened, it is still a tender plant that will die if exposed to temperatures below 50 degrees.
- Even when days are warm, nights can still be cold in the early spring.