

**Thank you so much for your support of The Garden's Edge!
We have a special gift for you this year.**



Tomatoes, Rabinal plaza market, Baja Verapaz, Guatemala, 1973.
Photo: Lewis Johnson



Doña Tiburcia, Doña Martina López Cortez, y Doña Clara Cortez selling tomatoes in the market, 1966

Tomatoes (Pix in Achi) originated in Guatemala but native varieties have virtually disappeared due to diseases caused by massive pesticide use and monocultures. Many varieties were also lost during the 36-year civil war and genocide when many gardens and villages were burned by the military. The thick-skinned almost tasteless tomatoes found today in Guatemala were introduced by agro-development programs as hybrids designed to withstand heavy pesticide spraying and transport.

Over the years, we've helped recover many traditional seed varieties in Guatemala, but sadly tomatoes were not one of them. We couldn't find local seed, and the few organic varieties we did try quickly withered with disease.

Ten years ago, a farmer from New Mexico heard this sad story in one of our presentations during a Seed Travels visit. She suggested we check the USDA Seed Bank for tomato seeds collected in Guatemala pre-1970s before industrial agriculture had taken hold. We found three varieties collected in Guatemala in the 1970's. Two had names- Pishito, and Mansano, and the third was given a number to identify it. We planted the 25 seeds we received in each packet at our garden in New Mexico. We were lucky to have a good harvest!

Then we found these historical pictures on Facebook from the Rabinal market in 1966 and 1973. Through crowd-sourcing in the comments, the tomatoes were identified as an old variety called "Maravilla", that disappeared in Rabinal during the war. That's when we realized these were the seeds we had found and were working with!

Thank you for the memories of the past, they help future generations remember tomato Maravillas, since they no longer grow here.

The tomatoes are from the village of Xococ, they were harvested locally. Now you don't see that variety anymore.

That tomato is very delicious, we would harvest them with my grandmother during Easter.



Here we are at our farm, cleaning the **Mansano** tomato seeds with a group of students from the University of New Mexico.

We returned our seed harvest to Guatemala and they were planted by Fransico (bottom left) in his greenhouse. Seed rematriation is a process through which seeds are returned to their place of origin. As you can see in the picture below, he had a successful harvest!



Pishito Tomato

Aurelia Xitumul, who works for The Garden's Edge in Guatemala, visited our farm where she identified the **Pishito** variety as a "wild tomato" that used to grow along the roadsides. She remembers picking them to add to her food when she was working as a plantation day laborer.

When Olga Buerero, from the village of Panacal in Guatemala, visited New Mexico, she immediately recognized the **Tomate Mansano** growing on our farm. She said that variety disappeared from her village in the 1980s during the civil war. On September 15, 1981, her mother walked to the market with her harvest of **Mansano Tomatoes** in a basket on her head to sell. She heard gunfire, dropped the basket of tomatoes, and hid in the street. That was the day the military massacred civilians in the market. Many people from surrounding villages went into hiding, and the military raided and then burned many fields. Olga's mom had to leave her crops in the field and she went into hiding. That is when she lost her **Mansano** seeds. That was the last time Olga had seen the **Mansano** tomato in her village. Many seeds were lost during this time.



Pishito Seeds

Julian Vasquez Chun, The Garden's Edge Agroecology Coordinator, brought a sample of the three varieties to an elder from his village. Reina Margarita (right) identified one of these as **Maravilla** and was filled with joy to see the tomatoes that she remembered from her childhood. We hope that this tomato can once again grow abundantly in her native soils.

Thanks for helping our work grow!
We hope you enjoy planting these very special tomatoes in your garden.



Maravilla (left) Mansano (right)



Maravilla Tomato



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