

**COLLEGE OF AGRICULTURAL, CONSUMER
& ENVIRONMENTAL SCIENCES****Tomato Stakes Vs. Cages****Grant McCarty****Local Foods and Small Farms Extension Educator**gmccarty@illinois.edu**First, Clean Them!**

Before they go back into the garden, you should clean the cages and the stakes. Pathogens that cause disease can overwinter in the nooks and crannies. Cleaning wipes or rubbing alcohol can be applied and the cages/stakes wiped down.

Second, Space Them!

Usually, it's one tomato cage per plant. If staking, I tend to space them with a stake every two plants. If it's a tomato that I know needs support (like a 'Cherokee Purple'), I might put a stake after every plant.

Pros for a Tomato Cage:

1. Very few tomato plants.
2. Growing a determinate tomato plant (reaches a set height)
3. A raise bed where space is limited.
4. Easy to set up

Cons for a Tomato Cage:

1. Flimsy (though metal/tough ones available now)
2. Growing an indeterminate tomato plant (so an heirloom-open pollinated tomato)
3. Many tomato plants in a row (easier usually to stake)
4. Plant may overtake the cage

Pros for Staking

1. Indeterminate Tomato Plant
2. Many tomato plants in a row
3. Need greater support for your plants
4. Trellis problematic areas.

Cons for Staking

1. Do not have as many tomato plants
2. Not useful for small patio-type tomatoes
3. Can require a lot of effort to continue to stake, support, and trellis.
4. Can get expensive if using wood/metal.