



Question of the Week

Q: Seeds inside some of the tomatoes in my refrigerator have started sprouting. I can actually see the sprouts pushing through the skin of the fruit. Is this normal? Is the fruit safe to eat?

A: According to Becky Grube, UNH Cooperative Extension sustainable horticulture specialist, seeds occasionally do germinate prematurely to produce seedlings inside the fruits, a phenomenon known as “vivipary”. Overripe fruits are more susceptible. Seeds don't normally germinate inside fruit but remain dormant for up to several weeks after they mature, probably due to the presence of the hormone abscisic acid (ABA). As fruits age, the levels of ABA tend to decrease, and seeds lose their dormancy. Fruits stored in the refrigerator may also be more likely to show vivipary, since cold temperatures can reduce seed dormancy. Some varieties are more likely to have this happen than others. Although the seedlings inside the fruit may look unappealing, the tomato isn't harmful to eat.