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## Tomato Growing

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## *Tomato Growing*

June, they'd arrive in the driveway,  
jungled in the trunk  
yawned up to divulge a hundred  
dumbfounded flowers  
suddenly famous with light.  
Mother pounded down stakes,  
smiling, shredding  
a loud daisy print dress  
worn ten years ago.  
Drenching holes all afternoon,  
she smoothed out the roots in mud.  
By July they'd punched out,  
fists that woke hard and green in her palm.  
Mid-summer brought a ritual morning hosing  
souping each plant 'til cracked ground  
remembered again how to drink.  
She burlaped them in September  
from mean arguments of frost  
and Canadian winds.  
Come harvest,  
tomatoes lit up the kitchen counter,  
gorgeous redheads scattered sexy  
at her elbow, picked  
when ripeness most approaches speech,  
when her low garden whispering  
swelled to a perfect answer.  
They were Mother's pumped-up  
opinion of summer,  
a private conversation rowed  
on the brown windowsill,  
what she and the sunlight  
said to each other.

*Judith Hougen*