

Concord grape colored tomato with antioxidant-packed flesh? It contains a key secret: Snapdragon DNA

As home gardeners in the U.S. page through seed catalogs and pick out their favorite heirlooms, there's a new seed that has never been available to them before: a tomato the color of a concord grape with plum-colored flesh. It looks otherworldly, maybe Photoshopped. But it's not.

This nightshade is purple because its creators at Norfolk Plant Sciences worked for about 20 years to hack color genes from a snapdragon flower into the plant. The genes not only provide pigment, but high levels of anthocyanin, a health-promoting compound.

This dusky fruit, named the Purple Tomato, is the [first genetically modified food crop](#) to be directly marketed to home gardeners – the seeds went on sale [February 3].

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Anthocyanins have been shown to have anti-cancer and anti-inflammatory effects. They're antioxidants, which can help neutralize unstable molecules in the body that can [damage healthy cells](#) and are linked with aging and disease.

"It's normal for tomatoes to make these healthy antioxidants. They typically don't make them very much in the fruit, though," [Nathan Pumplin, CEO of [Norfolk Healthy Produce](#)] says, explaining that they normally [appear in the stems and leaves](#). "So what [lead biochemist Cathie Martin] did was put the on switch into tomato."

[**This is an excerpt. Read the original post here**](#)