



GROWING TOMATOES – COMMON PROBLEMS

Compiled by My Green Garden

COMMON NUTRIENT DEFICIENCIES

NITROGEN (N) – shows as stunted growth, pale green younger leaves

Solution: Diluted fish emulsion, well-aged compost or manure.

PHOSPHORUS (P) – stunted growth, purpling leaves, especially underneath. *Solution:* Check pH. If too high or too low, P becomes unavailable. Treat with blood and bone or rock phosphate.

POTASSIUM (K) – Brown scorching on leaf margins and chlorosis between the leaf veins. Slow to flower. Blotchy fruit ripening. *Solution:* Lightly sprinkle potash around the plant and water well. Spray leaves with Seasol.

IRON – Pale yellow leaves, interveinal chlorosis especially in younger leaves.

Solution: Check pH. If too alkaline, add sulphur. Also, foliar sprays of iron chelates.

CALCIUM – Blossom end rot. Also browning around the base of the leaves.

Solution: Add Lime and water in well.

CULTURAL ISSUES

FRUIT CRACKING – Inconsistent watering. Fruit is still edible.

CATFACING – Puckering, scarring or indentations on the fruit. Caused by excessive nitrogen, inconsistent watering or low temperatures at fruit set.

BLOSSOM END ROT – Sunken rotten end on tomato. Ensure even watering as fruit develops. Calcium in soil at planting time helps. Use lime or gypsum when preparing soil.

LEAF CURL – Leaves curl upwards and thicken. High winds, too cold or too hot, too much/not enough moisture. No cure – just make sure conditions are ok for subsequent new growth.

SUN SCALD - Pale, 'burnt' areas from sun stress. Do not overprune. Provide shade cover in hot areas.

PESTS PROBLEMS

CUTWORM – Stems cut through overnight.

Solution: Provide a physical barrier along stems eg toilet rolls

STEM BORER – Sudden dieback of plant, traced to a rotten brown stem.

Solution: When any brown spots occur on stems, push a pin through to kill larvae. If limb wilts, cut it off and burn.

APHIDS – Usually congregate under leaves. Aphids reduce plant vigour and act to spread diseases.

Solution: Check leaves regularly and squash or spray with garlic or soap spray.

WHITEFLY – Congregate on the underside of leaves, sap-sucking. Adults fly off but resetttle. Breeding cycle is very regular.

Solution: Sticky yellow traps early in the season. Soap spray at first signs and then repeat weekly. Covering plants with dense netting will help control. Spray with soap-based or oil-based sprays to control large infestations. Eco-Neem also works.

CATERPILLARS – Enter fruit at an early stage. Fruit rots as caterpillar develops.

Solution: Spray with Dipel or Yates Success or netting to stop moths entering.

RUSSET MITES – Foliage yellows then dies off. Starts at the base and then progresses upwards. Especially prevalent in hot, dry weather. *Solution:* Lime sulfur sprays will help if repeated.

COMMON DISEASES – **CROP ROTATION is essential. Avoid planting in same bed for 4 years.**

BLIGHT (Early and Late) – Leaf spots and lower leaves

TARGET SPOT – Brown to black spots with concentric circles first appear on lower leaves, spreading.

Solution: Remove and destroy infected leaves. Spray remaining foliage with a fungicide, such as EcoFungicide, Lime Sulfur or Copper Oxychloride.

FUSARIUM WILT – Begins with yellowing on the bottom leaves and works its way up. Commonly occurs in hot weather.

Solution: To confirm, split open the stems. If positive to fusarium the inside of the stems will have pink to brown discoloration. Maintain pH of 6.5-6.8. Keep plants mulched to keep soil cool.

VERTICILLIUM WILT – Similar symptoms to Fusarium. Lower leaves dry out and wilt first. Whole plant may die.

Solution: Remove and destroy entire plant. Crop rotate next year.

BACTERIAL WILT – Young leaves wilt in hot weather, despite adequate watering. Plant remains green but wilts and dies.

Solution: Cut stem at base of plant and suspend in water. Positive to BW if white slimy substance is released. No cure. Lift and destroy.

SEPTORIA LEAF SPOT – Affects lower leaves first and then moves up the plant. Small yellow spots that turn brown with a black spot in the centre. Leaves may yellow and then fall off. Prevalent in humid weather.

Solution: Remove and destroy affected leaves. Spray remaining plant with a fungicide (as above).

ANTHRACNOSE – Shows up as small, soft, sunken water-logged spots on the fruit. Spread by splashing water off the ground.

Solution: Keep ripening fruit clear of the ground. Spray remaining fruit with a fungicide as ripening begins. Do not save seed from these plants.

MOSAIC VIRUS – Light and dark green blotches on the leaves and sunken patches under the fruit skin.

Solution: No cure. Don't smoke! Plant disease-resistant varieties.

TOP 6 TIPS FOR DISEASE FREE TOMATOES

1. Practice crop rotation which includes any of the solanums. (4 years ideal, longer if disease present)
2. Good drainage.
3. Air circulation around plant, especially at base. Prune off lower branches.
4. Keep area weed free. Mulch helps stop splash from the soil.
5. Avoid overhead watering and keep soil moisture consistent.
6. Keep tools and hands sterile between plants, especially if plants are disease affected.