



Common Problems: Pests/Diseases/Environmental Disorders of Tomatoes

General Control Practices for Common Problems

- Practice Crop Rotation – Do not plant in same spot in the garden; rotate every three years. For pots, clean thoroughly before use and use all new potting soil every year.
- Plant Disease-Resistant Varieties – Look for disease resistance indication on seed packets or nursery labels; if the information not on the tag, ask the nursery person. The initials stand for disease/pest resistance against: V=verticillium wilt, F=fusarium wilt, N=nematodes, T=tobacco mosaic virus.
- Space Appropriately – Good air circulation will inhibit disease. Follow spacing on seed packet or nursery label, generally 1½ to 3 feet apart.
- Water Consistently – Keep evenly moist fruit cracking, leaf roll and blossom end rot are result of uneven watering.
- Do Not Water Overhead – Use soaker hoses or hand water at the base of the plant. Wet foliage encourages disease.
- Mulch – Help the soil stay evenly moist, moderate soil temperature and control weeds.
- Encourage Beneficial Insects – They act as natural pest control; avoid pesticides.
- Practice Integrated Pest Management (IPM) – Squish, Squirt, Stomp. Use the least toxic approach to control pests and diseases.

Common Pests

- Tomato Hornworm – large green caterpillar with distinctive horn on rear. Symptoms – leaves and small stems completely eaten.
<http://www.ipm.ucdavis.edu/PMG/GARDEN/VEGES/PESTS/hornworm.html>
- Cutworms – smooth-skinned brown caterpillars that curl into C-shape when disturbed; active at night. Symptoms – young plants cut off at ground level.
<http://www.ipm.ucdavis.edu/PMG/GARDEN/VEGES/PESTS/cutworm.html>
- Tomato fruitworm (Corn earworm) – caterpillars of various colors; stripes on sides and many short whisker-like hairs on body surface. Symptoms – eat fruit and leave deep watery cavities.
<http://www.ipm.ucdavis.edu/PMG/GARDEN/VEGES/PESTS/cornearworm.html>
- Stink bugs – shield-shaped bugs with large triangle on their back. Can be brown or green with red/yellow/pink markings. Symptoms – attack fruit leaving blemishes that become white and pithy.
<http://www.ipm.ucdavis.edu/PMG/GARDEN/VEGES/PESTS/stinkbug.html>
- Tomato pinworm – tiny mottled caterpillars grey to yellowish with red or purple around each segment. Can also be quite dark. Symptoms – leaf mines and folded leaves. Bore into fruit where joins the stem.
<http://www.ipm.ucdavis.edu/PMG/GARDEN/VEGES/PESTS/tompinworm.html>
- Nematodes – microscopic, eel-like roundworms. The most troublesome species in the garden are those that live and feed within plant roots most of their lives and those that live freely in the soil and feed on plant roots. Symptoms – wilting, loss of vigor, yellowing; similar to lack of water. <http://www.ipm.ucdavis.edu/PMG/PESTNOTES/pn7489.html>

Common Diseases

- Alternaria (Black Mold) fungus. Symptoms – black lesions on ripe fruit.
<http://www.ipm.ucdavis.edu/PMG/GARDEN/VEGES/DISEASES/tomblkmold.html>
- Fusarium wilt – fungus. Symptoms – leaves on one side of plant turn yellow, spreads to entire plant, which then dies.
<http://www.ipm.ucdavis.edu/PMG/GARDEN/VEGES/DISEASES/fusarwilt.html>
- Verticillium wilt – fungus. Symptoms – yellowing in veins of leaves, spreads throughout plant, which then dies.
<http://www.ipm.ucdavis.edu/PMG/GARDEN/VEGES/DISEASES/tomvertwilt.html>
- Tobacco Mosaic Virus – virus. Symptoms – light green, yellow, or white mottling on leaves; stringy distorted leaves.
<http://www.ipm.ucdavis.edu/PMG/GARDEN/VEGES/DISEASES/tobacomosvir.html>
- Yellow Leaf Curl – virus. Symptoms – stunted plants; small leaves curl upward; yellowing between veins and on leaf margins; no fruit development.
<http://www.ipm.ucdavis.edu/PMG/r783103311.html>

Common Environmental Disorders

- Blossom end rot – dark soft spot on bottom of fruit – caused by inconsistent watering
<http://www.ipm.ucdavis.edu/PMG/GARDEN/VEGES/ENVIRON/blossomendrot.html>
- Fruit cracking – skin splits open – caused by inconsistent watering or overexposure to sun
<http://www.ipm.ucdavis.edu/PMG/GARDEN/VEGES/ENVIRON/tomcracking.html>
- Leaf roll – leaves roll upward when weather is cool; no action required
<http://www.ipm.ucdavis.edu/PMG/GARDEN/VEGES/ENVIRON/tomlfroll.html>
- Blossoms fall off – caused by too cool nights or too hot days or not enough sunlight
<http://www.ipm.ucdavis.edu/PMG/GARDEN/VEGES/ENVIRON/blossomdropvg.html>
- Sunscald – fruit turns leathery and brown – cause: overexposure to sun (need more leaves)
<http://www.ipm.ucdavis.edu/PMG/GARDEN/VEGES/ENVIRON/tomsunscald.html>
- Catfacing – fruit disfigured with cavities – cause: too cool and cloudy
<http://www.ipm.ucdavis.edu/PMG/GARDEN/VEGES/ENVIRON/catfacing.html>

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