

Tomato diseases showing up unfortunately

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Published July 15, 2017

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This recent weather has not been good for tomatoes. I noticed diseases starting to show up a few weeks ago when we saw cool nights with a lot of dew.

In addition, symptoms of bacterial leaf speck and septoria leaf spot as well as early blight are showing.

All of these diseases have symptoms that start at the bottom of the plant. The first show up as tiny round spots and grow and the early blight shows up more as a brown blotch.

Unfortunately, the weather is the primary cause of these diseases showing up now. Last year the disease didn't show up until later in July.

My tomato plants looked great back in early June. They were green, healthy and growing nicely.

However, when we had a few cool nights in a row with heavy dew on the leaves I knew I was in trouble. These are perfect conditions for development of leaf spot diseases on tomatoes.

All of these diseases require moisture for the pathogens to spread. We have had plenty of rain periodically as well as heavy dews at night.

Bacterial speck thrives under cool wet conditions; septoria leaf spot likes temperatures between 59 and 80F to sporulate; and early blight likes moderate to warm temperatures but lots of moisture.

We have had all of this in the last month.

These diseases are extremely hard to control as are most diseases. The trick to controlling diseases is to have the fungicide spray on the leaf to prevent the pathogen from growing into the leaf.

TIMING is everything! Once you see the symptoms (spots, yellowing, specks, etc.) the infection has already occurred and it's too late to spray the damaged leaves.

You *may* be able to slow the spread or prevent further infection with fungicides on those leaves that haven't been affected.

Keep in mind that you may see green leaves on the plant but they may already be affected. The symptoms don't show up immediately. Therefore, if you do spray, the leaves may very well have already been infected; the fungicide won't work.

One of the recommendations is to pick off the damaged foliage and dispose. This sometimes works in the later part of the summer after a significant amount of fruit has been harvested.

I am concerned this year because of the early infection. My tomatoes haven't started to ripen. As the leaves are affected and eventually drop off, plant development declines.

I am hoping that we have better weather (hot and dry) that will slow down the development of these diseases.

Unfortunately, we tend to deal with one or all of these diseases each year because of our weather. Learn as much as you possibly can about each of them in order to arm yourself with strategies to help minimize the impact.