

Some Common Tomato Problems

Most gardeners will have their tomatoes planted at this time and may be suffering with some tomato problems. Varied temperature, sunlight, and moisture conditions can significantly affect the growth of tomato plants as well as help to develop diseases under these conditions. Both fungal and bacterial diseases may infect and damage leaves, stems and fruit. These diseases can be spread by splashing rain, water run-off, wind-driven rain or mist. Septoria leaf spot and early blight (fungal diseases) may appear early along with bacterial leaf spot. Leaf spot may cause defoliation of the plant and, in later production, bacterial fruit-spot on the tomato. There are many other diseases which may appear in the early growing season. These are difficult to diagnose, even for the experts. More info can be found on OSU Fact Sheets [EPP-7625](#) and [EPP-7626](#) which cover both fungal and bacterial diseases.

If you have blossoming plants, you may be faced with having Blossom Drop. This can be caused when the nighttime temperature drops below 60 degrees. In May, we had sub 50 degree nights. When this occurs, try covering the plants at night to help keep the plant temperature above 60 degrees. Also, if the daytime temperature rises above 92 degrees, blossom drop can occur. It is good to also avoid excessive nitrogen fertilization of the tomatoes. More info can be found on our OSU Fact Sheets [HLA-6012](#) and [EPP-7627](#).

It gets even better . . . there is likely to be an increase in insect damage due to the very damp and humid weather that comes about on sunny days following rains. The corn ear worm and the tomato fruit worm are the more prevalent insects in Oklahoma. Simple visual inspection of the plants is the best way to identify the type of insect that is on your plants, which then leads to the type of control that can be used to eliminate the problem. Other pests can also be identified in our Fact Sheet [EPP-7313](#) and [HLA-6013](#).

In more mature plants other diseases can be caused by fungi, which are called wilts and blights. One major Oklahoma problem is a fusarium wilt. Early symptoms are yellowing of the lower leaves. The disease progresses up the plant stem, killing all the foliage and the plant dies. There are several other fungi that attack tomatoes, which again are listed in our Fact Sheet [EPP-7625](#).

Finally, there are non-infectious diseases such as blossom-end Rot. The fruit is affected when about half grown and is identified by a spot that starts and grows on the blossom-end of the fruit. As it matures, it grows and sinks into the fruit causing a dark, leathery look.

OSU Fact Sheets are available at the OSU Extension Center Tulsa Office (4116 East 15th Street) and also on our Tulsa Master Gardener website at [tulsamastergardeners.org](#).