



WEB CONTENT DISPLAY  
July 13, 2012

## TOMATO TIPS

My tomato crop in my garden this year looks impressive with a large amount of vegetative growth five feet tall but the tomatoes haven't set on a lot of fruit during the heat wave. There hasn't been a lot of disease but I noticed a few varieties where disease is starting at the bottom. Common diseases of tomato include septoria leaf spot, early blight, bacterial speck and bacterial spot. All of these diseases overwinter in the vegetable garden on infected plant debris. The spores are spread during the growing season by wind, water and human activity.

Sanitation is very important for reducing disease pressure in your garden each year. That starts each fall by removing all plant debris that is left in the garden. Rotating where the tomatoes go in the garden is also a good disease management practice.

One of the most common methods of tomato leaf infection is from disease spores splashing up from the soil surface in a rain or from irrigation. All of the diseases mentioned above overwinter on infected plant debris in the soil. Prevent this by covering the soil with a 2-3 inch layer of mulch. Common mulches include clean straw and newspapers topped with wood chips, or any other coarse organic material. Mulch also helps suppresses weed growth, moderates soil temperature extremes and helps retain soil moisture.

Keep tomato leaves as dry as possible by applying water to the base of plants through soaker hoses, instead of using an overhead sprinkler, since water on the leaf surface promotes germination of fungal spores and leaf infection.

Suppression of leaf spot diseases, once plants have been infected, can be accomplished through sanitation and the application of fungicides. Remove and discard heavily infected plants. A good tip is to remove diseased leaves as soon as they appear. This will slow down disease development without spraying a fungicide.

Fungicides are protective. They keep healthy leaves from becoming infected. Fungicides are not curative. This means that infected foliage will remain diseased and may die. Fungicides must be applied on a regular basis to provide continued protection for the healthy leaves. Fungicides for use on garden vegetables, such as liquid copper or Bordeaux mixture, are readily available at most garden centers. Read the fungicide label carefully to determine the number of days you must wait after the final fungicide application before fruits can be harvested. The biggest challenge is proper coverage above and below the leaves. Many homeowners choose not to do this at all using the organic route and plant more than you need!

## SEE YOU AT THE COUNTY FAIR

We move our office each year to the fairgrounds in Crete for a week during County Fair. The theme this year is "Good Ol' Country Roundup" which is fitting with the Bush Pullers Tractor Pull on Wednesday, Figure 8 Races on Thursday, Highway 101 concert on Friday and the Area's



Best Rodeo on Saturday night. The contractor hired by the Saline County Ag Society from Crete, Dimas Construction, did an outstanding job with the concrete work in Ag Hall. Dimas was quite helpful to me this summer with suggestions and pitching in a hand at key times. With a new sidewalk, some new pavers for a patio (Thank You to Endicott Clay Products) and the new memorial aluminum flagpole (Thank You Crete Walmart), the upgrades look great! For more information, call 402-826-5106 which is the Fair Office phone.

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