



## Question of the Week

**Q:** What is tomato blight? What causes it?

**A:** Tomatoes are the most popular vegetable grown in home gardens. Most varieties are susceptible to many diseases, among them the common leaf-spot diseases that usually arrive in mid to late-July. These fungal diseases (blights) affect the leaves, stems and, occasionally, the fruits of tomato plants.

Symptoms first appear on older leaves. Depending on which fungal species attacks, they could include (a) irregularly shaped brown spots with concentric rings radiating from the center, and often surrounded by a yellow halo, or (b) many small, water-soaked, dark spots with grey centers, dark margins and dark specks developing in the centers of the spots.

To help prevent leaf-spot diseases, promote good air flow around and within tomato plants and keep foliage as dry as possible. Mulch the plants. Avoid evening watering. Use soaker hoses to keep water at the ground level when irrigating.

You can slow the progress of tomato leaf-spot diseases by monitoring plants closely twice a day and removing all leaves that show the telltale signs of infection. Fungicides, such as chlorothalonil, maneb, and copper sulfate, will control leaf-spot diseases if applied early in the season. *Always apply any pesticide according to label directions.*

At the end of the season remove or thoroughly incorporate all crop refuse into the soil. Next spring, look for blight-resistant tomato varieties and rotate crops so you don't plant tomatoes or their close relatives (potatoes, peppers, eggplants) in the same spot.

Got questions? UNH Cooperative Extension's Family, Home & Garden Education Center Info Line offers practical help finding answers for your lawn and garden questions. Call toll free at 1-877-398-4769, M-F, 9:00 a.m.-2:00 p.m., or e-mail us at [answers@unh](mailto:answers@unh).