

**UNH Cooperative Extension Info Line Question of the Week**  
**LATE BLIGHT**

Q. I keep hearing about a terrible disease of tomatoes and potatoes called late blight. I'm new to vegetable gardening and want to avoid it. Can you tell me how?

A. Late blight is a fungal disease (*Phytophthora infestans*) spread by airborne spores from infected plants. It devastated tomato and potato crops throughout the region last summer and has already appeared in Connecticut, Maine, and Massachusetts.

Monitor your tomato and potato plants often for signs of the characteristic lesions on leaves or stems: pale green, water-soaked spots, often beginning at leaf tips or edges, which may be surrounded by a pale yellowish-green border. The lesions enlarge rapidly and turn greasy dark brown to purplish-black. Apply a protective fungicide containing chlorothalonil or (for organic gardeners) copper to healthy plants. Spray the undersides of leaves and well as the leaf surfaces. Follow all label directions.

If you do find suspicious lesions on your tomatoes or potatoes, remove some infected plant leaves and/or stems and send the sample to the UNH Plant Diagnostic Clinic (find a downloadable form at <http://bit.ly/plantlab>) for diagnosis. There's no charge for late-blight diagnoses. Write late blight confirmation at the top of the submittal form.

If the lab confirms late blight, pull and destroy infected plants by bagging and disposing of them as trash or plowing them into the soil immediately. Don't add them to the compost pile. Any infected plants left in the garden or tossed into the compost have the potential to serve as a source of infection for other gardens and commercial farms. For more information on late blight, visit <http://bit.ly/blightinfo>

Got questions? UNH Cooperative Extension Education Center's 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.edu](mailto:answers@unh.edu)