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## Preventing Late Blight

Late blight is caused by a fungus (*Phytophthora infestans*); in Latin the name means “plant destroyer” which is certainly what this fungus does to tomato and potato plants. Unfortunately, there is no silver bullet for control although fungicides can be applied preventatively before symptoms appear. Below are some tips to help you prevent late blight in the future.

- Recognize the symptoms. Plants have dark lesions on the stems and brown spots on the leaves that are accompanied by fuzzy white fungal growth during humid weather.
- Remove infected plant material **immediately**. Late blight is extremely contagious and spreads rapidly when the weather is cool, damp, overcast and windy. It will quickly spread to plantings of gardeners and farmers nearby. Remove infected foliage, double bag it in plastic, and put it in the garbage. Never put affected plants on the compost pile.
- Prevent overwintering: the fungus needs live tissue to survive the winter so remove any potato plants that come up next spring. The fungus will not survive on any dead tomato foliage that clings to cages or supports.
- Choose resistant varieties. Although no tomato varieties are immune to late blight, there are quite a few that are resistant to infection. Resistant beefsteak types include Legend, Mountain Merit and Iron Lady. Other resistant varieties include Mountain Magic, Plum Regal, Matt’s Wild Cherry, Defiant PHR, and Jasper. Resistant seed is carried by Johnny’s Selected Seeds, Seedway, and High Mowing Organic Seeds, among others.
- Give plants plenty of space and avoid overhead watering, especially late in the day.

One last thing: the most common tomato foliage diseases are early blight and septoria leaf spot. Tomatoes that are resistant to late blight are not necessarily resistant to early blight and septoria.

**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)**

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