

Tomato Troubleshooting

Compiled from the book, *Pests of the Garden and Small Farm* (UC Press)

Symptoms	Possible Problem	Solution
Leaves eaten, areas of fruit eaten, black, pellet-like droppings on and below plant.	Tomato Hornworm	Hand pick in evening or morning. Use Bt to control young hornworms.
Tomatoes are brown or black on the bottom (blossom) end.	Blossom end rot	Due to a calcium and water imbalance. Maintain even soil moisture. Avoid varieties most prone to it.
Leaves yellow and curled. Shiny or black spots on leaves and fruit. Clouds of insects fly up when plant is shaken.	Whiteflies	Sticky yellow traps. Insecticidal soap. Remove heavily infested plants. Beneficial insects.
Leaves curled downward. Shiny or black spots on leaves & fruit. Underside of leaves have green or pink insects.	Aphids	Wash off with blast of water. Control ants with bait traps. Remove heavily infested plants. Beneficial insects.
Poor vigor, reduced yields, leaves turn brown from the bottom up. Root swellings.	Root knot nematodes	Plant resistant varieties, labeled "VFN". Rotate crops. Solarize soil. Add compost.
Blossoms fall off.	Night temperatures below 55, day temps above 90, too much nitrogen, too much shade.	Plant suitable varieties in late April or early May, in full sun. Shake the plant midday. Use a balanced, low dosage fertilizer. Hormone sprays won't work on 90+ degree days.
Leaves roll upwards, look leathery.	Tomato leaf roll	Symptoms will disappear when temperatures warm up and soil dries out. Water carefully.
Tomatoes turn light brown and leathery on side exposed to sun.	Sun scald	Don't prune leaf cover from plant. Keep plant vigorously growing to produce more leaves.
Fruit with cracks, radiating from stem.	Fruit cracks	Happens during hot, sunny days. Keep soil evenly moist and maintain leaf cover.
Plants grow slowly and wilt. Roots have water-soaked areas that turn brown and dry up.	Phytophthora root rot	Especially found in clay soils. Avoid heavy watering for long periods. Water more frequently for shorter periods.
Water soaked brown areas on leaves and stems. Gray fungus on undersides of leaves. Fruit discolored.	Late blight, favored by high humidity and temperatures in the 60's.	Avoid sprinkler irrigation. Destroy plants after harvest.

Irregular yellow leaf blotches, which turn brown, but leaves don't drop.	Powdery mildew	Usually occurs in late summer and fall. Avoid water stress. Plant in full sun. Avoid excess fertilizer. Dust with sulfur.
Plants turn yellow on one side, spreads to rest of plant. Inside of main stem at base is dark red instead of ivory color.	Fusarium wilt	Plant resistant varieties, labeled: "VFN". Rotate crops. Solarize soil. Remove old plants.
Older leaves yellow, beginning between main veins. Internal stem is slightly tan colored, in small patches.	Verticillium wilt	Plant resistant varieties, labeled "VFN". Rotate crops. Solarize soil. Remove old plants.
Fruit distorted. Bottom of fruit is deeply scarred or lumpy.	Cat facing	Caused by cool and cloudy conditions at bloom. Fruit is edible.
Lower leaves and stems are bronze or oily brown color. Leaves dry up and drop.	Tomato Russet Mites	Avoid planting near petunias and potatoes. Add low rate applications of sulfur.
Fruit with cracks, in concentric circles, near stem.	Sudden rapid growth, usually following a rainfall after a dry spell.	Pick ripe fruit immediately after rainfall to prevent cracking.

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