

Week of July 23

By Sage Sassafras

Uh Oh!

Oh Gardeners who Grow Tomato and Potato Plants (especially Community Gardeners) – listen up. The Late Blight has arrived! Late blight is caused by a fungus called *Phytophthora infestans*, and it thrives in cool summers and frequent rains. It has shown up early this year and has been identified on tomato plants for sale at a number of home garden centers. These infected plants may serve as a source of inoculums (spores) that can spread the disease. These spores can be dispersed to healthy tissue via rain splash or wind currents. In addition, they can survive in potato tubers in storage.

Currently all tomato and potato plants grown in home gardens are susceptible to late blight. Late blight affects the fruits as well as the foliage and almost always causes rapid death of the entire plant. Tomato plants started from seed may be free of this disease, at least initially. Some potato varieties have leaves and stems which may be moderately resistant, but the tubers are not.

Leaves: Small lesions appear after 3-4 days. The infected areas on leaves may appear to be water-soaked, often beginning at leaf tips or edges. If these infected areas dry out quickly, they may appear lime-green or beige in color. Under moist conditions, a slightly fuzzy white fungal growth will develop.

Stems/Fruits: Brown to almost black lesions appear on infected stems, with white fungal growth developing under moist conditions. The same lesions will develop on fruit, either directly on the infected plants, or a few days after they are sitting on your kitchen counters.

Tubers: Late blight appears as a shallow, coppery-brown, dry rot that spreads irregularly from the surface through the outer 1/8-1/2 inch or more of tissue

Please go to the **Conservation page** at www.woodstockgardenclub.org to see photos and links to other articles with more information about this disease, fungicide treatment, and prevention options,

Please inspect your tomato and potato plants on a **daily basis!** If Late Blight symptoms are already appearing on plants in your garden, these plants should be removed immediately and put in a plastic bag for disposal. Don't put the removed plants in a compost pile.

The above information was taken from articles by Dr. Vern Grubinger at UVM Extension, Rowe, Miller, Reidel at Ohio State University Extension, William Fry of Cornell University, Dr. Meg McGrath of Cornell University.

Happy gardening and don't forget to check the website www.woodstockgardenclub.org. Remember that Mother Nature needs all the coddling we can give her.