



# How-To: **MANAGING PLANT DISEASE**

*Even healthy gardens can experience occasional diseases. First confirm that the problem is a disease, then follow through with a management plan.*



EGGPLANT LEAVES SHOWING  
SIGNS OF VERTICILLIUM WILT

## **FIRST STEPS**

Disease and pest problems can be hard to differentiate. If your plant shows any of these symptoms, it may have a disease:

- Discoloration
- Mottling
- Mold growth
- Stunting
- Abnormal growth

If your plants are showing disease symptoms, carefully identify the disease. Use a plant disease identification book, online resources, or ask your local cooperative extension service for help. Some diseases will merely slow down crop production, while others spread rapidly or kill plants. Accurately identifying the disease provides information that's necessary for a management plan.



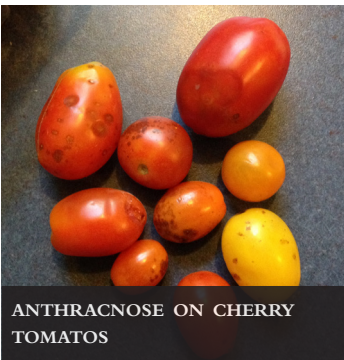
EARLY BLIGHT — A COMMON  
TOMATO DISEASE

## **DISEASE MANAGEMENT**

Plants with mild diseases like powdery mildew or early blight can be managed with organic-approved fungicides. Please note that fungicides do not solve a fungal problem — they merely slow its spread.

- Look for products with an OMRI seal, as these have been approved by the Organic Materials Review Institute.
- Follow the instructions on the label carefully and make a note of the date that you spray, as many fungicides require repeated spraying on a schedule.
- Look on the label for information that indicates how many days are needed between fungicide application and harvest.

Plants with severe diseases like late blight should be removed from the garden to avoid passing along the problem. When removing diseased plants from the garden, be sure to throw them away or put them in a pile far from the garden. Do not add diseased plants to the compost pile, as the compost may then pass along the disease.



ANTHRACNOSE ON CHERRY  
TOMATOS

## **PREVENTING DISEASE PROBLEMS**

Disease problems can show up even in healthy gardens. However, you can take some steps toward preventing disease.

1. Stressed plants are more likely to develop disease problems. Create a healthy garden environment by providing what your plants need to thrive. Especially take care to provide healthy soil and enough space for each crop.



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**SUNSCALD — NOT A DISEASE  
BUT A RESPONSE TO ENVIRON-  
MENTAL CONDITIONS — ON  
BROCCOLI PLANTS**

2. Plant strategically to avoid disease problems. For instance, if you've had problems in the past with powdery mildew, find varieties that are powdery mildew resistant. Alternatively, avoid planting crop types that have developed disease problems in the past.
3. Rotate crop families from year to year and plant a diverse garden, as many types of disease stay within the bounds of one crop family.
4. Avoid working in a wet garden, since diseases can spread through water.
5. Remove all dead and diseased plants at the end of the season, as well as any mulch from beneath these plants, and discard them away from the garden.