

## Let's Talk Gardening

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Tom Harris, Ph. D.

The Country Gardener

### Summer Gardening Pests and Problems

Dr. Jerry Parsons says that spring gardening is just practice for fall gardening. In many ways, it's true—especially when it comes to pests and problems that come with the veggie garden. Many people don't have a clue about how to manage these situations. Today, we're gonna look at a few along with their solutions.

**Tomato blight:** this is the disease that causes the bottom leaves on the plants to turn brown and drop off. It's a fungal disease that can be minimized by:

- ❖ Buy really healthy plants to start with. Stick with reputable nurseries and you'll get healthier plants. If the plant looks a little sickly, don't think you're gonna "heal" it by taking it home and giving it lotsa TLC. Ain't gonna happen.
- ❖ Water only in the morning to avoid having wet leaves during the night. Cool, wet, dark conditions are those that fungi really like.
- ❖ Water only the soil and not the leaves. Use drip irrigation if possible.
- ❖ Mulch under the plants to keep soil-borne pathogens from splashing on the lower leaves

**Black spot on roses:** this fungal problem causes black, usually round, spots to form on the leaves which then turn yellow and drop off. This process weakens the plant as it continues and will eventually kill the rose.

- ❖ Like the tomato plants above, one of the best assurances of not spreading the disease is to mulch under the plants to avoid splashing the fungal spores up onto the leaves.
- ❖ Water only in the morning so that the leaves don't stay wet during the night.
- ❖ Select rose varieties (usually old-fashioned ones) that are black-spot resistant.
- ❖ Remove diseased leaves and canes and put them in the trash—not the compost pile.
- ❖ Leave enough space between plants that air can circulate freely.
- ❖ Plant in sunny locations to help keep the leaves dry.
- ❖ Maintain a regular regimen of fungicide spraying.

**Spider mites:** they're hard to see but fairly easy to control. If you can't tell for sure what is making the leaves on some of your plants turn yellow and drop off, shake the limb over a piece of white paper. If the little dots move, you've got spider mites. They are to be treated with miticides, not regular bug sprays. Remember that mites live on the bottom side of the leaves, so THAT'S where you have to spray the miticide. Be sure to read the label carefully. There are some plants that you can't use the miticides on. Hot and dusty conditions usually stop the little buggers from doing their damage.

**Slugs and snails** can eat up entire plants overnight—especially those located close to the ground. They really like new and tender plants. They are most active at night and on cloudy days. On sunny days, they hide under leaves, old boards, rocks, etc. That's the key—if you wanna get rid of them, get rid of anything that they might be hiding beneath. Also, since they thrive on moist soils, only water in the mornings so that the top of the soil is dry by evening...another case for mulch. Treatment includes slug and snail baits which are corn-based, poisons which are safe to use—but you still need to read and follow the directions. Diatomaceous earth is effective as long as it stays dry.

And, of course, there are always the **deer and other wildlife**. Fencing seems to be the only sure way to keep them out. Even then, raccoons seem to be able to overcome these barriers. They got one of my cantaloupes the other day, but I've since fenced it in (inside the other fence) and now I'm the recipient of this most delicious fruit of the gods. My B.I.L says that it's the best cantaloupe he's ever eaten. (I coulda told him that.) The liquid-fence products seem to work for a while, but the spray program must be maintained regularly.

Send your comments and/or questions to [gardener@gvtc.com](mailto:gardener@gvtc.com).