



Early Blight of Tomato



Early blight (*Alternaria solani*) is problematic on tomatoes causing brown to black spots with ‘bull’s eye’ appearance on lower and mid-canopy leaves. Low levels of early blight on tomato lower leaves are generally not damaging to yield. Once the plants set fruit, lower leaves typically senesce and drop. If symptoms are spreading up the plant to younger leaves and the plant is less mature, control may be necessary to limit defoliation and yield loss.

Management techniques include staking tomato plants to keep foliage up off the ground for improved air flow. Drip irrigation will aid in keeping the leaves dry and unfavorable for early blight infection. Plastic mulch can also help to both protect the plants from soil contact and to reduce the growth of weeds which can increase humidity and limit air flow in the flower canopy.



Early blight. North Carolina State University



Early blight on tomato Clemson University - USDA Cooperative Extension Slide Series, Bugwood.org

Application of fungicides may be needed for early blight control. Fungicides labeled for commercial fields include: azoxystrobin (Amistar, Quadris), boscalid (Endura), chlorothalonil (Bravo, Echo, etc.), mancozeb (Dithane, Manzate), maneb (Maneb), mandipropamid/difenoconazole (Revus), pyraclostrobin (Cabrio), trifloxystrobin (Flint), and ziram.

Fungicides available for home gardeners. Field tests have shown that chlorothalonil, maneb, and mancozeb fungicides --- all available at gardening supply stores under a variety of trade names --- provide effective early blight control when used according to label directions and applications are started early in the season.

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