

Septoria Leaf Blight

This is Gardening with Chuck on 1420 KJCK, I'm Chuck Otte, Geary County, K-State Research and Extension Ag & Natural Resources Agent. The weather is hot, people are watering gardens like crazy and we need to start getting ready for a lot of problems with tomatoes. Today we'll talk about leaf blight, tomorrow, everything else! Septoria leaf blight is a fungal disease that everyone deals with every year. It's the one that starts on the lower leaves, puts spots on the leaves eventually killing the leaf and just keeps moving on up the plant, one leaf at a time. The disease is extremely common and there is no real resistance to it in any tomato variety. The disease loves summer heat and wet leaves which is one of the reasons we want to keep tomato leaves as dry as possible and encourage as much air movement around the plants as possible. Even still, these tactics are meant to just slow down the disease, you're probably going to get it in your tomatoes anyway and then that requires a little bit of fungicide. Many people will treat their tomatoes religiously with fungicides, though, and still have their tomatoes ripped up by septoria, so what's going on. Septoria is a disease that will infect a leaf from either the upper or lower leaf surface. Since the disease most often works its way up from leaf to leaf, infection from the underside of the leaf is probably the most common form. So when you treat with a fungicide, it becomes important to spray the upper and lower leaf surfaces. The two commonly used fungicides are chlorothalonil and mancozeb. I would start with chlorothalonil first. If you have a small garden and have had a lot of septoria in the past, you may not be able to get this disease under control, though. This has been Gardening with Chuck on the Talk of JC, 1420

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Hot weather tomato problems

This is Gardening with Chuck on 1420 KJCK, I'm Chuck Otte, Geary County, K-State Research and Extension Ag & Natural Resources Agent. This is the time of year that tomatoes really start to get cranked up and going and about the time of year that we start to see a lot of problems, or perceived problems, with tomatoes. Lots of tomatoes are blooming about now and one thing that happens when you have high temperatures especially daytime highs in the mid to upper 90s or higher, overnight lows above 70, especially 75, is that tomatoes just won't set fruit. They bloom and the flowers dry up and fall off. This is simply a heat response and nothing to get too cranked up about. As time goes on, and the weather cools off just a little, the tomatoes will start to set on. As the plants mature on through the summer they seem to be less affected by high temperature stress. The next issue we seem to see, once they start setting on, is the fruit starts to rot on the bottom end, away from the stem, about the time it is starting to ripen. This is a physiological condition known as blossom end rot. Even though the bottom of the fruit is rotting away, it is not a disease that you can spray for. The fruit decay is caused by a short term calcium imbalance in the plant. Essentially not all parts of the plant grow at the same rate and the top of the plant is growing faster than the roots. Our soils have plenty of calcium, you don't need to add more. In a few weeks the roots will have caught up and this problem will be gone. In the meantime, mulch the soil around the tomatoes, water deeply and try to avoid big swings in soil moisture as this can make the problem worse. Pick off the affected fruit, toss them into the compost pile and just be patient! This has been Gardening with Chuck on the Talk of JC, 1420 KJCK, I'm Chuck Otte.

Vine Crops and blossoms

This is Gardening with Chuck on 1420 KJCK, I'm Chuck Otte, Geary County, K-State Research and Extension Ag & Natural Resources Agent. Being a gardener myself, I think I can safely say that as a lot, we are a very impatient group of people. We plant seeds or plants and we want some action tomorrow, or next week or sometime very soon. From the moment that first blossom opens we are checking every single day, sometimes twice a day on the growth and development of whatever it was that was blooming. Come on, admit it, you've done it! So when something is blooming and blooming and blooming and you aren't seeing any developing produce, you start to get a little antsy and start wondering what is wrong! Well, if your plant of concern is one of our vining plants, be it a cucumber, a squash or a melon, it's time that we had a little sex education class. Vine crops are what we call monoecious, which is basically Latin for one house. Each plant has separate male and female flowers, unlike tomatoes, which have perfect flowers, meaning the male and female parts are all in the same blossom. On most vine crops, the male flowers start blooming days, sometimes weeks earlier than the female flowers. It is very easy to tell the difference. Male flowers or staminate flowers, are attached to the vine by a long slender thread or element. The female or pistillate flowers, have a miniature version of the fruit between the blossom and the vine. If all the flowers currently blooming have a long thread attaching them, then you have all male flowers. Wait a while and you will start to have female blossoms and then all will be well! However, if you have no blossoms at all, you have problems and need to call me! This has been Gardening with Chuck on the Talk of JC, 1420 KJCK, I'm Chuck Otte.

Bagworms - 2nd treatment

This is Gardening with Chuck on 1420 KJCK, I'm Chuck Otte, Geary County, K-State Research and Extension Ag & Natural Resources Agent. By the last week of June, all bagworm eggs that are going to hatch have hatched. You aren't going to probably notice the little bags even yet unless you are getting up close to the plants. But I encourage folks to not look for the bags, look at how the cedar itself is looking. As an infestation of bagworms starts to feed, in just a few days, a week at the most, the color of the cedar starts to change. It starts to become a lighter green, almost a slight yellowing or jaundiced look overcomes it. I can drive down a road at 55 and pick out bagworm infested cedars. If you notice this color change, start looking close - the bags are still small, probably none a half inch long but they are there and you need to start control NOW. As a general rule of thumb, figure that a bagworm that doubles in size is going to eat four times as much. Treatments need to be applied now. If you treated a week or two ago, go ahead and treat again this week. If you haven't treated at all and you are finding even a few bagworms, treat today. Get yourself a hose end sprayer or one of the newer products with a built in hose end sprayer and soak the junipers down to the point that the spray is dripping off. Then treat again ten to fourteen days after the first treatment. In another month the bagworms are going to be huge and very hard to control. By then they will have also done a majority of their damage. So get out there and start checking your junipers and cedars for off color or the presence of little bagworms. If you don't see anything wrong, keep checking. If you do find them, then start treating and don't wait! This has been Gardening with Chuck on the Talk of JC, 1420 KJCK, I'm

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Grasshoppers

This is Gardening with Chuck on 1420 KJCK, I'm Chuck Otte, Geary County, K-State Research and Extension Ag & Natural Resources Agent. Insect populations go in cycles based primarily on the weather. Some species, like mosquitoes, are wet weather insects. Other species, like box elder bugs, chinch bugs and grasshoppers are dry weather insects. I started noticing a build up of grasshoppers very early on this growing season. The occasional wet spell has helped slow that down - you see, periods of rainy weather bring on some fungal diseases that attack grasshoppers. But then hot dry weather returns and they start to thrive again. Dealing with grasshoppers in a garden basically comes down to not giving them a hopper friendly environment around the garden. Grasshoppers lay egg masses in the ground. When the small hoppers hatch they are easy pickin's for birds and other insects so if there is a lot of cover and shelter around they have a better chance of survival. So the first step is to make sure that weeds and grass around your garden are kept mowed down. If you wait to treat until the grasshoppers are already in your garden, you are in trouble. The best thing to do is to walk the area around your garden and see if there are a lot of small grasshoppers jumping up ahead of your feet. If there are, then you spray the area around your garden, perhaps going out 15 to 25 feet. Don't spray the garden, spray around the garden. There are many lawn and garden insecticides that are effective especially against small grasshoppers. Use one with a hose end sprayer to get good coverage. There are also some old liquid baits that don't use pesticides that can work. If you are interested in those, call me! This has been Gardening with Chuck on the Talk of JC, 1420 KJCK, I'm Chuck Otte.