

Disease Resistance

Expect some disease

The first thing is that we are talking about *disease resistance*, not disease cures or disease removal. Expect some disease, and try to follow measures to keep it under control. Our weather has been extremely wet this spring, (I don't have to tell you), and disease may be a concern this year.

Most plant diseases are present in the air and soil, and most of these are already in the soil. The longer you grow crops in the same spot, especially the same crop, the more prevalent diseases will likely to be. Ever hear of beginning gardeners having a green thumb? Well, probably the pests have not had time to take up residence in their new gardens. – But they will. You can see why rotating crops is such a good idea in the case of a farm, but it's just not practical for a small home garden and especially in a community garden plot.

Keep it clean

One of the best ways to control disease is to prevent possibly diseased debris from being incorporated into the soil. This can be accomplished by good sanitation. Like cleaning up spent vegetative material and removing it from the garden before a new growing season and removal of any part of a plant with apparent disease. Be careful! Throwing any possibly diseased material in the compost heap is a great way to continue the disease cycle in future years. Materials do not usually break down completely within a year in a compost pile.

Weather conditions

Wet and windy weather is also a great harbinger of disease. Think "fungus" and it brings to mind cool and damp conditions. Most diseases are fungal. Some are bacterial, and although these can be the worst, they are also fewer in occurrence.

Control

So what is a gardener to do? Relax, most crops are free from disease. Just try to pay attention, and keep monitoring what you grow for early signs of the beginnings of disease. Try to nip it in the "bud"!

- Keep watching for early signs of disease (unhealthy, non-normal, growth,) Insect damage can be similar, but the chewing, sucking and piercing signs of insect pests are absent in the case of disease.
- As already mentioned, remove plant debris, and practice good air circulation. Avoid crowding plants too close together.
- Pay attention to the varieties of the plants you grow. Look for the term “Disease Resistant” label on plants, seed packets, and in seed catalogs. Try to grow crops and varieties that are appropriate for our growing conditions and zone!
- Keep notes on planting dates, impressions of weather patterns, and any problems that you encounter in a season. You will forget!
- Some fungi and molds form when crops are harvested. Pay attention to conditions when you harvest and how you store your produce, herbs or flowers. It is easy to find information about the best conditions to harvest about everything.
- It is important to know what a healthy plant looks like at the same growing stage as your plant. Look at other plants, and at pictures of diseased plants. Without this comparison, it is easy to misjudge.
- Lastly, email me if you are concerned at all.

“A tomato plant’s purpose is just to produce tomatoes. Don’t worry about the vine, except that it produces good fruit”.

I think I said that.

Dave