

URBAN FARMER

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Disease Control: Fusarium Wilt

Fusarium Wilt is most commonly found throughout the United States and can affect tomato, potato, pepper and eggplant plants. It also can affect legumes and bananas.

What is it?

Fusarium Wilt is a soil-borne pathogen which enters through the roots of the plants. The infection interferes with the water conducting vessels in the plant, so when it spreads to the stems, it restricts water flow. This causes the plant to wilt and then turn yellow.

The symptoms typically appear late in the summer and will affect the older leaves of the plant first. As the disease progresses through the plant, the younger leaves are then affected and the plant eventually dies. Usually, only one side or one branch of the plant shows symptoms.

This infection can survive in the soil for years. It is spread through water, insects, and garden equipment. The disease will develop during hot weather and will do the most damage to plants when the soil temperature is 80 degrees or above. It is encouraged by dry weather and low moisture in the soil.

Although this disease doesn't always kill off an entire plant, it will make the plant much less productive.

How to cure it:

When you have diagnosed the disease, sterilize all your garden equipment and remove the affected growth from your garden. After removing the plant from the garden, if the disease persists, solarize the



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soil before planting in that area again. To solarize the soil, place a clear, plastic tarp across the soil and leave it for four to six weeks during the hottest part of the year. This also will reduce pests like nematodes, other fungi, insects and weeds residing in the soil.

When destroying the infected plants, be sure to burn them and do not recycle the plants and possibly the disease by placing diseased plants in the compost pile.

Only use chemical treatment as a last resort. Chemical treatments for Fusarium Wilt will be labeled for being able to be used on Fusarium. Soil fumigants containing methyl bromide or chloropicrin also treat the disease, but they can be damage the plants and also require special permission to use due to the chemicals in the product.



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How to prevent it:

The best way to prevent Fusarium Wilt is to plant resistant varieties. If you use high-nitrogen fertilizer, this could make the plants more susceptible to Fusarium Wilt. Instead of high-nitrogen fertilizer, use a slow-release, organic fertilizer. Be sure to rid of weeds in the garden as many weeds can be carriers of the disease. Another preventative measure is to use Mycostop, a biological fungicide, which will protect plants from the disease. This is approved for organic use.



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