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Disease Control: Mosaic Virus

Although sometimes referred to as Tobacco Mosaic Virus or Cucumber Mosaic Virus, Mosaic Virus affects more than 150 types of plants, ranging from fruit-bearing plants to vegetables and flowers but the most commonly infected plants are cucumbers, tomatoes, squashes and cauliflowers.

What is it?

There are two main kinds of Mosaic Virus. Cucumber Mosaic Virus is the most common type, and it is spread by aphids. Most times, this version of Mosaic Virus affects cucumbers, but it also can be an issue affecting tomatoes, melons, squashes and other varieties.

Mosaic Virus is a viral disease, which means it can be difficult to diagnose because oftentimes, the symptoms are different depending on the affected plant. The most common symptoms of Mosaic Virus include mottled leaves with yellow, white and differing shades of green spots which look like blisters. Another symptom is oftentimes, the plant will be stunted and experience growing difficulties. Plants may be deformed, and leaves can appear wavy or crinkled.

For Cucumber Mosaic Virus specifically, leaves will exhibit shoestring syndrome, where there's a malformation of the leaves because the edges don't develop. For Tobacco Mosaic Virus, leaves will be mottled and deformed or twisted. Sometimes, the veins within the leaves will appear overly yellow. Tobacco Mosaic Virus is spread through seeds and direct contact.



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How to cure it:

Once a plant becomes infected, there's no cure for Mosaic Virus. Remove the plant and destroy it. Once the plant has been destroyed, be sure to disinfect your gardening tools. This includes garden ties, pots, your hands, greenhouse benches and more.

How to prevent it:

The best way to prevent Tobacco Mosaic Virus is to grow resistant species. Unfortunately, there is not a tomato species resistant to Cucumber Mosaic Virus, but those species resistant to Tobacco Mosaic Virus may showcase some resistance to Cucumber Mosaic Virus as well.

For the most part, the virus is usually spread by insects. Try to cover your plants with a floating row cover or other methods to prevent insects from reaching your plants. Most commonly, aphids, leafhoppers, whiteflies and cucumber beetles are the



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insects that transmit this disease.

Some species of weeds can serve as a host for Mosaic Virus, so if you control the weeds in your garden it may help prevent the virus from infecting your plants. Mosaic Virus also can overwinter on the weeds, so it's important to keep a clean garden in all seasons. For seeds that are not resistant to Tobacco Mosaic Virus, soak seeds in a 10 percent bleach solution prior to planting. Avoid handling tobacco near the plants.

If your plants get infected, do not save the seeds from this batch. The virus is more easily spread in damp conditions, so refrain from working in the garden when it's wet.

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