

Extra care given tomatoes could pay off in harvests

This is the time of year when you begin to see the "fruit of your labor" with your tomato plants. Now you may say the fruit on your plants are mighty scarce or even the plants look sort of poorly.

Well, there are many things that can cause those problems.

Just a few of the more common are: poor fruit set, blossom-end rot, bacterial wilt, Fusarium wilt, Verticillium wilt, early blight, late blight, and nematodes. The important thing to remember is that you can do something about most of them.

Poor fruit set is usually caused by poor pollination.

One of the primary reasons for poor pollination is low bee numbers. Bees do help pollinate tomatoes, so having a hive close by can help.

Something else that can help with the bees is applying any pesticides that you may have to use late in the afternoon versus early to mid-morning. Bees normally work blossoms during the morning, therefore, afternoon pesticide applications would be less likely to contact the bees and kill them.

Extreme fluctuations in soil moisture can also cause some fruit-set problems. Practicing a regular irrigation and good mulching program will help to stabilize soil moisture.

Normally, blossom-end rot is seen this time of year, after several fruit clusters have been set on each plant. It is a physiological disorder that results from a lack of calcium in the blossom-end of the fruit. Usually it is seen following extremes

Extension News

Willie Featherstone Jr.
County Extension
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in your garden. That means using soil test information regularly to apply the proper amounts of lime and fertilizers.

Tomatoes need a soil pH of 6.5-6.8. The soils here in Hoke County will usually be more acidic than that or have a lower pH.

Adding lime to the soil helps raise that pH. Applying too much fertilizer at one time can also cause

blossom-end rot to occur. You should follow soil test recommendations to insure proper fertilization.

Since the problem is usually seen following extremes in soil moisture, you can help control it by mulching your plants to conserve soil moisture and using irrigation if necessary. Tomato plants require about one inch of water per week. That amount should be applied by rain or irrigation.

However, be sure not to "over-water" your plants, as that can cause as many problems as too little water.

Spraying your tomato plants with calcium can also help you fight blossom-end rot. You can spray the plants to wetting with a calcium solution at the rate of four level tablespoons of calcium nitrate or calcium chloride per

gallon of water.

The spray should be applied once a week for two to three weeks beginning when the second fruit cluster blooms.

One good thing about the spray is that it can be mixed with the fungicides you can use to control blights.

All of the wilts (bacterial, Fusarium and Verticillium) are characterized by wilting of the leaves, leaf yellowing and death, and discoloration of the water-conducting tissues of the plant.

The most practical treatment for any of the wilts is to use a resistant variety.

However, if you cannot use a resistant variety, you should use a crop rotation plan of 3-4 years.

Also, fumigation of the tomato rows can help control them.

There are several fumigants available to home gardeners that can be put down in the rows before setting-out the plants. In fact, some of the fumigants can be applied in the fall to protect your crop next spring.

Both early and late blight plus several other tomato plant diseases can be controlled with any one of several fungicides on the market. The secret to controlling these type diseases is setting-up and following a regular spray program.

Nematodes are microscopic worm-like animals that attack the root systems of susceptible plants. Trimming the roots as nematodes do can weaken the plant enough to allow diseases to infect otherwise healthy plants.

Nematodes by themselves can also cause yield losses or even plant death if they are severe enough. The only way to know the seriousness of a nematode problem is to take a nematode for analysis. Such a sample should be taken during the growing season or just after.

There are several ways you can control nematodes. The two simplest are crop rota-

tion and the use of resistant varieties.

The use of soil fumigants is one that requires a little more effort.

However, some of the same fumigants that work on the wilts will also work on nematodes, so you can beat two problems with one treatment.

After reading all of this you have probably decided that there can be a lot of work and planning

to raising beautiful tomatoes. Well, that is true, but that is why a bountiful crop is so appreciated and called the "fruit of your labor."

For more information on the proper fumigants, fungicides, resistant varieties, and soil and nematode testing information feel free to call the Hoke County Agricultural Extension Office at 875-3461.



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Yard of the month
July's yard beautiful belongs to Roger Dixon. The Dixons live on the corner of Edinborough and Jackson streets. The award is presented each month by the Raeford Chamber of Commerce. Yards are judged by the Raeford Junior Woman's Club on neatness and appearance.

Shoulder pads making come back

Shoulder pads are making it big on the fashion scene this season. How does one place them in a hand-sewn garment?

Shoulder pads are placed after the sleeves are sewn in. Match the center of the pad (the widest part) to the shoulder line of the garment and extend it 3/8 inch to 5/8 inch beyond the armhole seam into the sleeve.

Pin the pad in place from the right side of the garment.

Loosely handstitch along the

On the Front Burner

Alice Pettitt
Home Economics
Agent



shoulder seam and armhole seam allowance. Or sew in snaps at the shoulder seam and corners for removable pads.

Rainbow Pear Compote

- 1 can (16 oz.) pear halves
 - 1/2 cup orange juice
 - 1 piece (1 1/2 inch cinnamon stick)
 - 4 whole cloves
 - 1 kiwifruit pared and sliced
 - 1 red apple, cubed
 - 1/2 cup halved red grapes, seeded if necessary
 - 1 orange, peeled and sectioned.
- Drain pears, reserve 1/2 cup liquid. Combine reserved liquid

(See FRONT, page 7)

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