

## Topple Tomato Problems with These Tips from The Pros

Leimone Waite, Master Gardener, June 9, 2019

### 1. Fruit on cherry tomato splitting.

This usually happens when the fruit is close to ripe and it suddenly swells due to taking in too much water, either from overwatering or rainfall, causing the skin to split. To prevent fruit splitting don't overhead water and be consistent in watering about the same amount each day. With all the rain we have had the past month this has been difficult to prevent.



A cherry tomato plant grown at Village Micro-Farms in Mangilao, April 1, 2019. (Photo: Frank San Nicolas/PDN)

### 2. Tomato in a large container has fruit developing but the ends are all brown on the tomatoes.

This is caused by blossom end rot. Blossom end rot is not a disease but is caused by a lack of calcium in the developing fruit. This can be due to low levels of calcium in the soil or inconsistent watering as calcium need adequate water levels to move around in the soil and plant. To prevent, make sure that you are not letting the soil dry out too much between

waterings. If this problem persists you may need to add some bone meal or another fertilizer high in calcium to the soil before planting next year.

### 3. Plants are stunted, have yellowing leaves and wilt in the warmer part of the day even with adequate water in the soil.

This sounds like root knot nematodes, the University of California Integrated Pest Management (UC IPM) Website describes the best way to diagnose if this is the problem. "Root knot nematodes usually cause distinctive swellings, called galls, on the roots of affected plants. Infestations of these nematodes are fairly easy to recognize; dig up a few plants with symptoms, wash or gently tap the soil from the roots, and examine the roots for galls. The nematodes feed and develop within the galls, which can grow as large as 1 inch in diameter on some plants but usually are much smaller. The formation of these galls damages the water- and nutrient-conducting abilities of the roots. Galls can crack or split open, especially on the roots of vegetable plants, allowing the entry of soil-borne, disease-causing microorganisms."



(Photo: esseffe, Getty Images)

Control of nematodes is difficult, you can solarize soil but this usually lasts about a year. Choosing plants that are nematode resistant can your best bet according the UC IPM "One of the best ways to manage nematodes is to use vegetable varieties and fruit tree rootstocks that are resistant to nematode injury. Tomato varieties with the code VFN (Verticillium, Fusarium, Nematodes) on the seed packet or label are resistant to common root knot nematode species."

#### **4. Sticky or deformed leaves.**

This is caused by a large number of aphids feeding on the plant. To control you can use a strong spray of water to knock aphids off the undersides of leaves or, with large infestations, you may need to use an insecticidal soap or a neem oil spray. If using a spray, check to make sure that you don't already have large populations of beneficial bugs that maybe eating the aphids before you spray. You can find help identifying your beneficial bugs here. <http://ipm.ucanr.edu/QT/beneficialpredatorscard.html>.

*The Shasta Master Gardeners Program can be reached by phone at 242-2219 or email [mastergardener@shastacollege.edu](mailto:mastergardener@shastacollege.edu). The gardener office is staffed by volunteers trained by the University of California to answer gardeners' questions using information based on scientific research.*