

AUGUST IN THE GARDEN-2026

WEATHER

My experience with the monsoons is the rain usually show up the week after July 4th weekend. This year the rain came a little later, but it has been sporadic around Santa Fe with some places getting lots of rain and other places getting a little. It has not been very consistent. At least the temps are starting to cool down now. No more temps in the 90's in the days. And the monsoons have cooled down the nights too.

The winds in spring were horrible. This year I put medium weight row cover over my tomato plants as soon as I planted them outside as I know the beet leafhopper is always around from May until the monsoons come in July. They like our dry, hot, windy conditions which we get in May and June. This bug can bite the tomato plants and give it a lethal virus called Curly Top Virus (CTV). The winds kept tearing holes in the row cover, and I kept patching them up but I still lost 3 tomato plants to CTV.

For more info on the beet leafhopper and Curly Top Virus, you can go to my blogsite, giantveggiegardener.com

HAIL DAMAGE IS A BIG PROBLEM

Now that the monsoons are here, hail can be a big problem if we get it. Hail can shred many vegetables in just a few minutes. Many will come back but some will not if the center of the plant where leaves grow out is demolished. I use hail netting and/or 30% shade cloth, depending on the crop and they work very good at repelling the hail. You can leave it on and won't have to run out and throw row cover over your crops. Just put it on and leave it. And it lasts a long time unlike row cover. If you don't use anything to protect your plants and you do sustain damage from hail, spray with a fungicide like **Monterey Complete Disease Control** or **Liquid Copper Fungicide** to help them out. Of the two, I like **Montrey Complete Disease Control** as it covers other diseases too. Hail damage can make them vulnerable to fungal diseases. Hail actually bruises tomato plants.

TIME TO FERTILIZE-Rain can cause many nutrients to wash thru the soil so now is a good time to fertilize. I fertilize one time every month and use liquid fish fertilizer and seaweed and spray on the leaves. I also use the fungicides right along in my gallon hand sprayer so you can do all three things at one time.

Another fertilizer I'm trying out is **Espoma Organic Tomato-Tone Fertilizer**. It helps

promote flower and fruit production. It is in a granular form and can be spread around your tomato plants about 3" from the stem and water in. I now use it in my planting holes when first planting tomato plants. Follow directions. You don't use a lot either. Just sprinkle it on top of the soil about 3" away from the stem and water in. The plants are looking good, and it has some calcium in it which should help with blossom end rot that can affect some tomato plants.

HARVEST TIME!

Many vegetables are getting ready to harvest now. Keep picking vegetables so they will produce more blossoms. If you don't, the plant will slow down or even stop, as it thinks its job is done when it makes seeds. Keep up with harvesting to keep plants producing.

TIME TO PLANT A FALL GARDEN!

I haven't even harvested many vegetables and yet here it is time to start a fall garden, (if you want one). You can plant the same crops you planted in early spring right now and still get a fall harvest. Crops like beets, carrots, kale, chard, peas, greens, and warm season lettuces called **batavians** should all be planted before mid-August for fall crops.

PROBLEMS TO LOOK OUT FOR ON DIFFERENT VEGETABLES

POWDERY MILDEW-All squash, pumpkins, cucumbers and melons are prone to powdery mildew when the monsoons come. I use **Monterey Complete Disease Control** for fungal diseases. I spray my plants as a preventative and after it rains. Some people use baking soda for powdery mildew, but it is not as effective.

SQUASH VINE BORERS-They are pretty much gone by now.

SQUASH BUGS-They are here now so hand pick off the adults and put in a bucket of soapy water and scrape off the rootbeer colored eggs off the stem and underside of the leaves. Do this once every 7 days to get control of them. When your squash gets flowers, uncover them if you have them covered with row cover so pollinators can get to them. I just put a post up on my blog, **giantveggiegardener** about dealing with these pests.

APHIDS -Spray a hard stream of water on the plant but not so hard you destroy the leaves. Use organic **NEEM** or **AZAMAX** in the evening AFTER the bees go away and when it is cooler. Do not spray on a warm day or it may burn your plants. I like Azamax best which also comes from the Neem plant as well.

FLEA BEETLES-This small dark beetle (1/10") that eats leaves-shotgun holes in leaves, but it doesn't kill the plant. It particularly likes eggplants. It is pretty much gone now.

PROTECTION from flea beetles: I use row cover. Now that their gone, take off the row cover.

PILLBUGS-Also known as Rolly-Pollys, or armadillo bugs. Use organic **Sluggo PLUS** to control them on newly sprouted seedlings or when planting seeds. They do not bother plants once the plants get 3 inches tall. Another option instead of growing from seed is to buy transplants.

GRASSHOPPERS-Can be a problem and a big one. *NOLO Bait* and *Semaphore Bait* are no longer available. When I looked up what works on hoppers, a product called *Carbaryl* (which is found in Sevin) and is very toxic to many insects including beneficial insects, so I don't use it. Plus, it's not organic. Put row cover over your crops.

TOMATO TALK!

HERE ARE SOME TOMATO PROBLEMS (BUT NOT DISEASES)

BLOSSOM END ROT-CALCIUM DEFICIENCY

Brown or black leathery patches on the bottom of the tomato of ripening tomatoes indicate blossom-end rot. This is generally caused by a calcium deficiency at fruit set or uneven watering and is prevented by planting tomatoes in compost-enriched soil and the plants mulched with straw to keep moisture levels more constant. In mid-summer if we get a lot of rain, it shows up. Some tomato varieties are more prone to it than others and the plant can outgrow it too.

TOMATOES CRACKING-When we get a lot of rain, the tomatoes take in more water than the skins can handle and the skins crack even on green tomatoes, usually at the top. The cracks will heal but will leave scars although they are fine to eat. Turn off you drip system if you get a lot of rain for a couple of days. To check moisture level, I put my finger into the soil up to my second digit and if it comes out dry, water.

You should water well when they are growing but cut back when you are getting ready to harvest. But don't stop watering, they still need water, just not as much. Cutting back on water helps bring out the flavors of tomatoes.

CATFACING-This is if your tomatoes have cracks on the bottom that look like a cat scratched them. Ok to eat.

SUNSCALD-Tomatoes can get sunburned and if they do, they can leave a sunken spot on the side where the sun burned it. I don't eat them as they get mushy.

LEAF ROLL-cause of tomato plant leaf curling, also known as leaf roll, is attributed to physiologic conditions. While its exact cause may be unknown, it's believed to be a sort of self-defense mechanism due to stress. It does not necessarily represent a disease.

Now let's talk about TOMATO DISEASES-

EARLY BLIGHT

Early Blight is a fungal disease that attacks tomato plants starting on the bottom leaves of the plant and works its way upwards. It usually shows up with the monsoon season. The lower leaves start turning yellow and get blotchy. If left unchecked, it can take over your plant killing it although it won't die immediately. It comes from water splashing the soil up onto the lower leaves. The culprit are Early Blight fungal spores which live in the soil-the fungal spores colonize on the lower leaves and move upwards. Here are some things you can do to help control Early Blight.

1. The first thing you do is trim off the affected branches where the leaves are yellow and blotchy. Trim all lower branches off tomato plants whose leaves are yellowing. I'd much rather deal with Early Blight than Curly top virus (which is always fatal and not much we can do about it). At least you can somewhat control Early Blight. Keep trimming up your plant as needed. Spray with Monterey Complete Disease Control.
2. When you trim, make sure branches they don't touch the ground and disinfect your trimmers in a 10% bleach solution in a small container after you trim a plant, so you don't spread it to another tomato plant. It is transmissible from plant to plant.
3. Stake or tie up any branches that might touch the ground.
4. Mulch with straw underneath the plant so the soil can't splash up on plant when it rains or if you water overhead.
4. I use **Monterey Complete Disease Control** which is the same fungicide I use on squash plants. Spray it on when the leaves are dry. I spray any affected plant every 10

days or after it rains. Spray all parts of the plant-both on top and underneath till dripping. Don't wait till you get the disease-**it works best as a preventative**.

TOMATO HORNWORMS

I'm getting reports that some people have them although they haven't shown up in my garden yet. Large finger size green worm that eats your tomato leaves and sometimes eats part of the tomatoes. They are very good at camouflaging itself but look for it to hang upside down on the stem and usually on the outer top portion of the plant, not deep inside.

PROTECTION: Hand pick. Can use ultraviolet flashlight to see them at night to pick off and put in a bucket of soapy water to dispose.

POLLINATION PROBLEMS

Tomatoes are self-pollinating and won't set fruit at 92°F+. If the temperature gets above 92°F, the tomatoes drop their blossoms, which is called ***blossom drop***. This is a self-aborting act to save itself. But the plants will keep producing flowers and once the temperatures are below 92°F they will set fruit and once they have set fruit, they can handle higher temperatures as our tomato fruit grows. It is only when they are trying to set the fruit that the temperature is critical. A lot of people call, or text ask why they don't have tomatoes yet. This is why-just be patient!