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Prevent Diseases in Your Garden

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If your vegetable plants look a little funny this year, then they may have one of the many viruses. There seems to have been an increase in virus problems this year. Symptoms include mosaic patterns, discolored streaks and distortion and stunting of leaves.

There is no cure for virus diseases, only prevention. The incidence of virus problems in gardens can be prevented by:

Planting resistant varieties. Newer tomato varieties may have resistance bred into them. You may see the letters V, F, N or T under the variety description, which indicates resistance to verticillium wilt, fusarium blight, nematodes and tobacco mosaic virus. In areas with a history of virus problems, be sure to plant resistant varieties. Many heirloom varieties do not have disease resistance.

Pest management. Control insects and weeds diligently. Insects transmit many viruses between weeds and desirable plants. Use row covers to keep insects out of tomato plantings.

Crop rotation. A three to four year period between tomato crops is recommended. Be sure that period does not include any similar crops such as pepper, eggplant or potato.

Barrier crops. Planting between weedy areas and tomatoes such as corn can be effective.

Culling or destroying affected plants is imperative if symptoms are seen. It is very difficult to identify which virus is affecting tomato, but the strategy is the same.

Sanitation. Be sure the garden is well tended and clean, including the control of plant debris.

Human activity. Some viruses are transmitted by humans. In the case of tobacco mosaic virus, it can be spread by workers who have handled tobacco. Avoid working in the garden when it is wet.

Be sure to visit the plant clinic at Moose Valley Farms during our Customer Appreciation Day, Saturday, May 2. Bring in a sample and as much information as you can and we will solve your problem! For more information, call 267-5108.

Mike Bauer is the Horticulturist for Moose Valley Farms, a full-service garden center located in Naples at mile marker 495. Please feel free to call us at 267-5108 or stop in if you have any questions.