

For Immediate Release:

From the University of Connecticut Home & Garden Education Center

PRESS RELEASE

March 30, 2010

Late blight update from the University of Connecticut

Many gardeners are concerned about growing tomatoes this year if they had problems with late blight of tomato and potato last summer. Questions about whether the pathogen will overwinter in the soil, how to prevent the disease from occurring again and if there are any resistant cultivars have been pouring into the Home & Garden Education Center as people begin getting ready for the 2010 gardening season. The pathogen, *Phytophthora infestans*, survives in living tissue and will be killed by freezing temperatures. Therefore, you do not need to be concerned about your soil harboring this pathogen and creating a source of infection for this year. *P. infestans* can, however, survive the winter in infected potato tubers left in the soil after harvest. If you had infected potato plants, thoroughly clean remaining tubers from the soil. Crop rotation to nonsusceptible hosts in that area is recommended. Destroy any volunteer potato plants that develop. Most years, late blight is sporadic or absent in our area because it spreads from the south on wind currents and arrives late in the season, causing far less damage. Last year, the pathogen was introduced on tomato transplants carrying the disease so it arrived early and then we had very favorable weather for disease development and spread. There are few tomato varieties that are consistently resistant to late blight. Some that have shown some resistance include Stupice, Juliet, Matt's Wild Cherry, Mountain Magic, Plum Regal, and Legend. The late blight pathogen is not seed-borne and seed from infected plants may safely be used for growth of new transplants.

For further information, contact the UConn Home & Garden Education Center toll free at (877) 486-6271 or by email at ladybug@uconn.edu.

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