

Cucumber Mosaic Virus

Farmer
Fact Sheet

100

What is it?

It is a virus that infects plants in many families, especially those in the cucumber, legume and tomato (including pepper/chilli) families. The scientific name is *Cucumber mosaic cucumovirus*.

Damage

When alone in many plants, eg chilli, tomato and pumpkin, the virus causes faint yellow patches on the leaves. In other plants, eg banana (photo, left) and snake gourd (photo, middle & right), symptoms are clearer. In both cases, yield loss is probably small. But often the virus occurs with other viruses (see **Fact Sheet no. 5**), symptoms are severe, and yield loss is likely.



How do I identify it?

Look for leaves with light and dark green patches. Spread is by aphids (green fly). They feed on diseased plants using long needle-like mouthparts, pick up the virus, fly to another plant, feed again and spread the virus. It happens quickly. The virus also spreads in sap when growers handle plants, and in some plants spread occurs in seed, but this is rare.

How to manage the cucumber mosaic

Note that once infected, plants cannot be cured, so it's important to prevent infection.

CULTURAL CONTROL

- Use only virus-free seed, ie if using own seed, take it from healthy-looking plants;
- Do not plant susceptible crops next to those with the disease; and do not plant them down-wind from infected crops; wind can carry adult winged aphids to healthy crops;
- Remove plants with symptoms from the nursery, and check others regularly;
- Wash hands frequently with soap and water when handling seedlings and transplanting;
- Weed around nurseries and crops in the field, as weeds are hosts of the virus and aphids.

RESISTANT VARIETIES: There are varieties of cucumber and courgette (zucchini) with resistance.

CHEMICAL CONTROL: This is not an option. By the time the aphids are dead, they have already fed and passed on the virus. Sprays of mineral oil (see **Fact Sheet no. 56d**) may repel aphids.

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