

Early blight

Recognize the problem

During the rainy season plants may have dark brown rings (leaf spots), surrounded by a yellow ring. The spots start first on the oldest leaves. This disease is called early blight or alternaria and affects melongene, peppers, tomatoes and other plants in the potato family.

Background

This disease is caused by a fungus. The spores or seeds of the fungus are spread by wind or water splash. This disease gets worse in warm and wet conditions. These spores survive in infected plant residue left in the field and in soil for a long time.

Management

- Keep the crop dry by planting crops wide apart to allow free flow of air between plants. For example, plant tomato at least 60-90 centimetres (two to three feet) apart.
- Keep the plants healthy during the first 6 weeks after transplanting by using recommended fertilisers. Additionally, you can buy a fungicide at the agro-shop. Apply the fungicide at the rate shown on the label.
- Prune overgrown plants to keep humidity low and to let in the air. Remove diseased plant parts from the field and dispose. Do NOT plough debris into soil!
- Mulch around plants to reduce soil-water splash and help keep spores off healthy leaves.
- Do not replant these types of crops (peppers or tomatoes) in the same field for at least two to three years. This is called 'crop rotation'.
- Apply a copper-based fungicide to infected plants at the prescribed rate on the label every 14 to 21 days or as recommended.

Early blight on potato leaves.
(Photo by Farmers Guide)



Early blight on tomato leaves.
(Photo by Mike Rutherford, CABI)



When using a pesticide, always wear protective clothing and follow the instructions on the product label, such as dosage, timing of application, and pre-harvest interval.

Scientific name(s) > *Alternaria solani*

The recommendations in this factsheet are relevant to: Trinidad and Tobago

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