



“What’s wrong with my vegetable plant?”

A guide to many vegetable garden plant disorders

Colorado State University Extension

Plants succumb to many different problems while we grow them in our gardens. They may get problems that have a biotic (living) origin, such as a virus, bacterial infection, fungal infection etc. However, it’s equally common that the problem is abiotic (non-living) in origin, these can include fertilization issues, moisture issues, environment (heat, cold etc.), complications with the soil etc.

This guide is designed to help walk you through where you’re seeing your problem and figuring out what might be causing the issue. Once you know the issue you can click through to one of our videos on the topic and find out more, including what you can do to resolve the issue whether it be this year or next. Happy sleuthing!

We have divided this guide into plant families, a plant family is a group of plant with similar growth habits and characteristics. Most members of the family are susceptible to similar growing issues. As you determine what family your plant is you can then ask where you’re seeing symptoms. This guide has divided symptoms into four main categories: stems, fruit/flower, leaves, and roots.

This guide goes over the most common plant families found in the vegetable garden. There are many more, if you have questions, you can reference our Colorado Vegetable guide: <https://growgive.extension.colostate.edu/colorado-vegetable-guide/>. This will provide more information on certain plant topics and specific plant varieties. Please also reach out to your local county extension office.

Scroll down to see photos and descriptions of many of the most prevalent diseases and disorders of vegetables in Colorado home gardens.

Lettuce/chard

Leaf

Botrytis - Water-soaked brown, gray, or orange soft rot that begins on lower leaves in contact with soil. Can move into healthy parts of the lettuce. Lettuce crowns can then become completely rotted. For more information: <https://youtu.be/LhWtlcXZBY>



Penn State Department of Plant Pathology & Environmental Microbiology Archives , Penn State University, Bugwood.org



Gerald Holmes, Strawberry Center, Cal Poly San Luis Obispo, Bugwood.org

Damping off - Fungal organisms infect very young seedlings. Can appear as poor germination. In young seedlings the stem will pinch or rot at the soil line, seedlings will then fall over and die.



Mariusz Sobieski, Bugwood.org (Image of beet, but symptoms similar)

Downy mildew -Yellow angular spots form on the upper surface of leaves, on the lower side growth becomes white and fluffy. Eventually these spots brown and dry. Impacts older leaves first. Can rarely become systemic.



Gerald Holmes, Strawberry Center, Cal Poly San Luis Obispo, Bugwood.org

Tomato Spotted Wilt

virus - Leaves develop brown to dark brown spots with necrotic (dead) areas. Necrotic areas may resemble a burn. Affects both young and old leaves. All lettuce types can be susceptible. For more information:

<https://youtu.be/WsKCICGhqd8>



Gerald Holmes, Strawberry Center, Cal Poly San Luis Obispo, Bugwood.org