

HAVE YOUR TOMATOES CALLED IN SICK

The Master Gardeners on the Tuesday and Thursday Hortline at the Gloucester Extension Office have spoken with several people who have experienced dying tomato plants. The problem seems to have occurred more frequently with purchased plants rather than those grown from seed.

According to a publication from the College of Agriculture and Home Economics, New Mexico State University, the culprit is Tomato Spotted Wilt Virus caused by tospovirus – a ssRNA virus. Common hosts for this nasty thing include tomatoes, peppers, celery, eggplant, peanuts, lettuce, pineapple, many legumes, many ornamentals, and even weeds such as field bindweed and curly dock.

The symptoms are :

- *Young leaves turn bronze in color
- *Leaves develop numerous small, dark spots
- *Plants appear wilted
- *Tips die back
- *Dark streaking of the terminal stems
- *Chlorotic ring spots and raised bumps on fruit
- *Fruits are deformed
- *Reduced fruit quality and yield

Since the virus is transmitted by thrips, warm temperatures and a high thrip population make the prevalence of the disease more likely.

Good husbandry offers the best disease management. The following cultural practices are essential:

- *Remove all infected plants
- *Weed and insect control
- *Crop rotation
- *Use reflective mulches where practicable

The plant pathologists suggest checking seed sources for “new” tolerant cultivars.

CABBAGES & KINGS

Gloucester’s new Library is so wonderfully spacious you feel as if you were the only patron there even when the parking lot tells you that you are one of a crowd. Check out the non-fiction section, 635.0+shelves for everything you ever wanted to know about gardening.

A book with a split personality is “The Garden Color Book,” by Paul Williams. It boasts “343,000 combinations for your garden” and, if you wonder how that is possible in a mere 176 pages, it is accomplished by dividing each page horizontally into three so that each division can be “turned” individually. Each strip has three plant portraits and the descriptions and pertinent material is on the facing strip. It is fun.

For a book published in 2000 it is curious that it includes *Lythrum*, a pretty pink ‘rocket’ that has been identified for decades as a pernicious nuisance throughout the eastern part of the United States. Not to ni-pick unduly, you, you may find the exclusion of common names baffling. The Latin nomenclature has become more familiar recently but *Athrium niponicum var. pictum* is not as easily remembered as Japanese painted fern.

After the divided pages, the book comes together with recipes for a variety of garden situations. Marvelous pictures of plants that work together to put zing into your borders.

If you are one of us who escapes the heat for a cool spot to read about gardening, you will love the collection of poems and essays gathered by Jamaica Kincaid, “My Favorite Plant,” writers and gardeners on the plants they love, a charming small book as varied as castor beans and poppies.