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Disease & Nematode Resistant Tomato Varieties - Smart Gardening!

Home gardeners who've experienced Fusarium wilt and root-knot nematode problems in past seasons know these pests can wreck a tomato planting. However, gardeners are learning to fight back with tomato varieties which resist these common garden pests.

Planting disease and nematode resistant tomato varieties is especially important when gardening space is limited. Under these conditions, it may be necessary to plant tomatoes within a few rows of where they were grown in previous seasons. This often leads to disease and nematode buildup, and production of a healthy tomato crop can become a real gardening challenge.

The tomato varieties listed below are examples of those which may be used by gardeners to avoid fungus wilt and root-knot nematode losses in the 1999 gardening season. When purchasing transplants, look for those which carry the "VFN", or similar designation on the variety identification tag.

"VFN" indicates the variety is resistant to Verticillium wilt, Fusarium wilt (generally both races of the Fusarium wilt fungus), and root-knot nematodes. Varieties which carry a "T" designation are also resistant to tobacco mosaic virus, a disease which often causes problems for tomato gardeners. Some of the listed varieties are also resistant to other disease pests.

Varieties which carry the designation "VF" only are resistant to Verticillium and Fusarium wilts but not resistant to root-knot nematodes. If you're not sure about the root-knot nematode status of your gardening area, the best way to find out is to collect soil samples for testing. Give us a call at your county Extension office for information on this service. And remember - there's no charge to have your soil checked for nematodes.

Large Fruit Varieties

- Park's Whopper Improved VFNT
- Better Boy VFN
- Lemon Boy VFN
- Enchantment VFN
- Celebrity VFNT
- Miracle Sweet VFNT
- Abraham Lincoln Improved VFN
- Daybreak VF
- Floramerica VF
- Sunmaster VF
- Mountain Delight VF
- Mountain Pride VF
- Mountain Spring VF
- Sunny VF

Giant Beefsteaks Varieties

- Big Beef VFNT
- Beefmaster VFN
- Burpee Supersteak VFN

Small Fruit Varieties

- Sweet Chelsea VFNT
- Small Fry VFN
- Supersweet 100 VF
- Cherry Grande VF
- Maya VF
- Golden Cherry FT
- Suncherry FT

Patio Tomatoes Variety

- Patio VF

Check with your garden supply store for other varieties which are resistant to fungus wilts and root-knot nematodes. Remember that while these varieties are resistant to certain diseases, there is no single variety which is resistant to all diseases which affect the crop. So, you'll still have to maintain a fungicide application program for early blight, Septoria leaf spot, and some of the other fungus diseases for which resistant varieties aren't widely available.

Want to try varieties which aren't disease resistant? Heirloom favorites such as "Brandywine," or "Old German" have been around a long time and are becoming more popular. You'll enjoy their great taste, but remember: these varieties have little disease and nematode resistance, so take care to plant them in areas where Fusarium wilt or root-knot nematodes haven't been a problem in past seasons.

Additional information on pest control in the spring garden is available at your county Extension office. Check with us for free publications which contain information to help improve your chances of gardening success this season.

Infobytes newsletter was written by the late Dr. Frank Killebrew, Extension Specialist.