

Tomato diseases cost Pa. growers \$\$

HERSHEY — Bacterial speck and early blight are among the three most costly diseases of tomatoes in Pennsylvania, according to Alan A. MacNab, of Penn State. Anthracnose fruit rot is the other major disease on processing tomatoes.

Bacterial speck symptoms, caused by the bacterium *Pseudomonas syringae* pv. tomato, include tiny raised black specks on green and ripe fruit, and small dark spots associated with torn areas on leaves. Fruit symptoms result in serious grade reductions in fresh market tomatoes and green wraps, and are a problem in whole-pack processing tomatoes because the specks frequently can not be removed with the skin.

Bacterial speck is promoted by cool weather, relative humidity of at least 80 percent, a long dew period, blowing and splashing rain, and continuous culture of tomatoes.

The disease organism is thought to survive on seed, and overwinter in soil for one year.

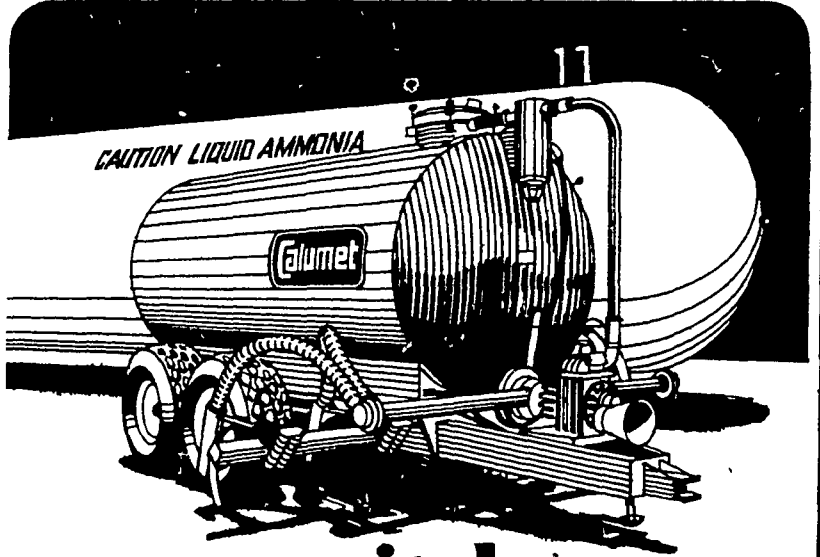
Early blight, caused by the fungus *Alternaria solani*, is the most important defoliation disease of tomatoes. It is characterized by numerous 1/4- to 1/2-inch diameter

leaf spots with concentric rings. Leaf spots and evident defoliation appears first on the oldest leaves. Yield reductions of over 50 percent have occurred where disease is prevalent and control is not attempted.

Early blight is promoted by long periods of high relative humidity (above 90 percent RH for 60 or more hours within 5 days), moderate to heavy rainfall (1 or more inches in 7 days), long leaf wetness periods from rain or dew, and moderate temperatures when leaves are wet (69 to 77 degrees Fahrenheit is optimum).

Controls include rotation, use of disease-free transplants produced from hot-water treated seed in pathogen-free soil, and use of appropriate fungicide programs, said MacNab.

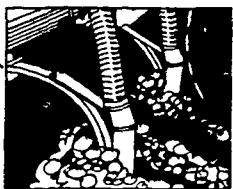
Speck has been controlled consistently by a tank mixture of maneb plus fixed copper where applications were made weekly and coverage was good, he pointed out. Early blight is controlled by regular applications of Bravo, Difolant, maneb, Polyram, and zinc-iron maneb. Costs of four spray programs expected to provide control of both speck and early blight range from slightly under \$100 to nearly \$200.



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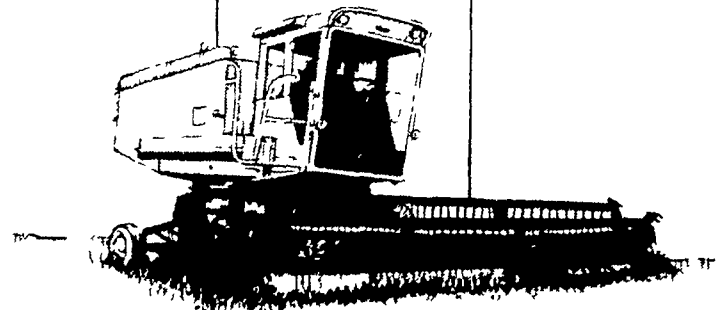
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