Tomato Problems

• Septoria Leaf Spot on Tomato
• Early Blight of Tomato
• Blossom End Rot
**Tomato Blight**
The most common culprits behind tomato blight in Minnesota are early blight and Septoria leaf spot.

**Septoria Leaf Spot on Tomato**
Septoria leaf spot is a fungal disease that starts on the lower leaves and moves up the plant on splashing water.

Severely infected leaves turn yellow and then fall off, reducing plant vigor and yield. Septoria does not cause fruit spots or rot, but leaf loss can increase sunscald and promote other fruit rot fungi.

**Early Blight of Tomato**
Early Blight can infect tomato leaves, stems, and fruit. It is easily identified by the rings present in leaf spots and fruit rot infections.

Early Blight causes leathery black fruit rot with raised black ridges. These infections often occur near the stem of the tomato fruit.
Managing Tomato Diseases

**Keep tomato leaves as dry as possible.** Use drip irrigation or soaker hose. Water in the morning so leaves dry quickly in the sun. Completely cover the soil around the tomato plant with mulch.

**Stake or cage plants.** Space plants so that air flows between plants.

**Scout tomato plants once a week.** Look for leaf spots on the lower leaves. Remove infected leaves and rotten fruit from the garden. Never remove more than 50% of a tomato plant’s leaves.

**Remove or bury tomato plants at the season’s end.** Infected plant material can be taken to a municipal compost facility or placed in a home compost pile that gets hot.

**If possible move tomatoes to a new location every year.** Rotating between 3-4 locations before returning to the original garden. Consider planting tomatoes in pots for one year. Try edible landscaping and move tomatoes to the flower garden. Use a community garden plot as an offsite location.

Septoria leaf spot spores can be splashed 6 ft on rain or irrigation.

**Remember some blight is ok.** We do not grow tomatoes for their pretty leaves. One study showed tomatoes could lose 25-50% of their leaves with no yield loss. Use the management practices above to reduce blight to a level that does not affect yield.
Blossom end rot is not a disease but a calcium deficiency in the fruit. It can be caused by over application of nitrogen fertilizer, cutting roots when weeding around tomato plants, and irregular watering.

To avoid blossom end rot. Water plants regularly and mulch the soil to maintain even soil moisture.

Follow instructions on the label or from a soil test when applying fertilizer.
Do not over apply fertilizer, especially nitrogen.

Avoid wounding roots.
Do not dig or cultivate for weeds close to the plant.

Learn more about tomato gardening:
http://z.umn.edu/tomatoes