

IDAHO POTATO PULSE



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Website: www.idahopotato.com

Tomato and Potato Late Blight Alert Leaflet

In 2009, many gardeners and commercial farmers in the Northeast saw their entire crop of lovingly cared for tomatoes overcome with late blight and rot on the vine, while the plants withered up and died. Late blight is devastating on both tomato and potato plants and once the disease has taken hold of the plant there is very little that can be done to halt its progress. Last year the disease is thought to have started in tomato transplants and then spread from diseased tomato plants to healthy tomato and potato plants in surrounding gardens and commercial fields.

Late blight can infect and kill plants within 10 days and the spores of pathogen can be carried in the air. The disease outbreaks that occurred in the Northeast last year were mainly due to a new strain of the late blight pathogen called US22. There was also an outbreak of late blight reported on potatoes in southeastern Idaho last summer. Fortunately, it was limited to only a couple of fields. However, what is worrying is that it was identified as being caused by the new US22 strain of late blight, suggesting that it also came from infected tomato plants.

There were no confirmed reports last year in Idaho of late blight on tomatoes, but the presence of the US22 isolate suggest that late blight was probably more widespread in southeastern Idaho than reported. Idaho potato growers were extremely lucky last year. In the Northeast, the US22 isolate spread quickly from tomatoes to potatoes and caused widespread losses in commercial potato crops.

This year there have already been reports of late blight found on tomatoes bought in a Walmart store in Kentucky, and those plants were identified as being produced in Michigan. With all the unseasonably wet weather we have been having in Idaho in the past few weeks it is important that people remain vigilant for signs of late blight in tomatoes and potatoes. The attached leaflet is designed to help homeowners and growers identify diseased plants and inform them of what steps they can take if they think they have late blight on their plants.

For more information on late blight in Idaho you can call the University of Idaho late blight hotline (1-800-791-7195). Or for instant updates on the status of late blight and other diseases in Idaho you can follow us on Twitter at "<http://twitter.com/potatodiseases>" or sign up for SMS text message notifications by texting "follow potatodiseases" to 40404.