The Week in Vegetables

**Burgeoning harvests** are probably taking up more and more of your time. It must be hard to get any farming done... That’s the split-personality nature of this time of year: your fall offerings are really growing now and demanding attention, and there’s still lots more to plant, but the money is out there in the field. And the weeds are beginning to go to seed. Prioritizing labor needs gets very hard at this time of year. Steady as she goes, don’t freak out. Not everything will turn out perfectly, and that’s OK. Make the money, but plan ahead for the jobs that need to get done over the next few weeks. There will be cool days in October.

**Diseases to watch for:**

The first summer squash plantings are aging, and with that comes disease. While Powdery Mildew has been running rampant in most places, a new entrant is **Plectosporium blight**, *Plectosporium tabacinum*, which was found on a Richmond farm. This often starts on leaf petioles, forming long, gummy lesions which start out looking diamond-shaped. It spreads to leaves, but the worst is when it gets on fruits, making them unmarketable. It’s not found on every farm like powdery mildew, but if you’ve had it before, chances are better that you’ll have it again. A rotation time of at least two years is recommended. Protectant fungicides do a good job, and some of the single-mode-of-action fungicides have some curative effect. See this item at UMass for more detailed information https://ag.umass.edu/vegetable/fact-sheets/cucurbits-plectosporium and consult with the New England Vegetable Management Guide for specific control materials.

**Basil Downy Mildew** affects most types of basil, although everyone’s favorite Genovese type seems to get the worst hit. It’s amazing how this disease has impacted smaller scale market growers in the 10 years since it’s been found in North America. We found some in Massachusetts a few days ago, just over the border. So pay attention to your lush looking basil patch because if you harvest several dozen bunches and dispense them to your customers, they may all go black within a day or two. That’s bad for business. Unfortunately, once the spores have landed and the conditions are good (some leaf wetness, not too hot, not too cool), it takes off. While there are now a few fungicides labeled for it, most growers are probably not anxious to spray their basil. Rutgers and Cornell are busy at work identifying genes for resistance and breeding has begun. For more detailed information, see this excellent article: http://vegetablemdonline.ppath.cornell.edu/NewsArticles/BasilDowny.html

Plectosporium blight, above. Basil downy mildew, below.

Pictures of what appear to be **Black Rot of Crucifers (below)** were sent to me the other day, on lacinato and Siberian kale. Heat and rain are perfect conditions for this bacterial disease to get started. This is a bacterial pathogen, *Xanthomonas cam-*
Diseases to watch for, continued:

*Pestris*, that usually infects leaves through their hydathodes, the pores at the edges of leaves that emit water when the leaves are full of turgor pressure. Usually, you see these droplets early in the morning. Lesions form at the leaf edges, often in a V-shape. However, the pathogen can be introduced (if it is present) if leaves get mechanically injured, like when you are briskly moving through your kale patch, snapping off leaves. It’s important to remove as many infected leaves as possible to reduce the spread, and this will also speed drying of leaves in the morning, as will keeping the planting weed-free. One common source of inoculum is through seed. Make sure that you are buying from a reputable source, and if you are saving seeds, consider a hot water treatment before seeding. See this: https://ag.umass.edu/vegetable/fact-sheets/hot-water-seed-treatment. See prevention strategies here: http://ipm.uconn.edu/documents/raw2/Black%20Rot%20of%20Crucifers/Black%20Rot%20of%20Crucifers.php?aid=110. For control measures, consult with the New England Vegetable Management Guide.

Insect pests to watch for:

This year has been a particularly bad year for **Potato Leafhopper**, *Empoasca fabae*. Everyone I speak to around New England and NY concurs. Every year, I see PLHs devastate beans, potatoes and eggplants, more than any other vegetables. (They really do a number on alfalfa, and it’s well documented that cutting alfalfa near a potato field will send millions of leafhoppers right over to the potatoes overnight.) One particular farm I work with grows vegetables in a somewhat old-fashioned but perfectly sustainable manner—row cropping. It so happens that this year, they have a planting of snap beans right alongside of the eggplants, in >300 foot rows. I have observed eggplant at this farm growing side-by-side with beans, and they are **untouched** by leafhoppers (see picture above). This is kind of amazing to me. I have to wonder if planting cheap and easy to grow rows of snap beans in amongst rows of eggplant could turn out to be an effective trap crop for PLH. Treatment of the beans with insecticide a few times during the summer might be necessary. Who wants to try that next year?

When I was a kid, I spent a fair amount of time in doctors’ offices. One of the benefits (and it wasn’t the cigarette smoke) was Highlights Magazine, which has the picture puzzle full of cryptic objects. The picture to the right reminded me of that.

Additional update snippets:

**Corn earworm moths** are definitely flying. While corn is their number one favorite around here, the big fat caterpillar boring into your tomato fruits could also be one of these. Anyone growing sweet corn organically should look into the Zea-Lator.

**Verticillium wilt** of eggplant is not uncommon. It’s usually seen in patches in a field. It’s important to get it properly diagnosed, and if confirmed, you should avoid planting susceptible varieties in these locations in the future.