



ASK A GARDENER

Dear Ceres:

I need help with my tomatoes. For some reason, I have not had a good crop this year. And the plants seem sickly. Many of the leaves have fallen off and the remaining ones have yellow and brown spots. I am crushed because tomatoes are my favorite fruit of the garden and I don't seem to be having much success.

Dear Crushed:

I agree that there is nothing better than a homegrown tomato. I am sorry to hear that your tomatoes are underperforming.

The spotted leaves and defoliation may be due to Early Blight or Septoria Leaf Spot. These are common fungal diseases of tomatoes. If you want to salvage some fruits this season, I would recommend that you carefully remove the diseased leaves and spray with an organic fungicide. Copper and Neem oil are options that may help. At the end of this garden season, make sure to clean up all tomato debris so that spores don't overwinter in your soil.

Next season, I would recommend that you plant your tomatoes in a different bed or in pots (crop rotation). Make sure that your plants have good air circulation and limit overhead watering. Drip irrigation is a worthwhile investment to limit disease spread. Finally, I highly recommend that you choose tomato varieties with resistance to fungal diseases. For example, *Iron Lady* and *Juliet* are varieties with good disease resistance. In fact, I planted both varieties this year.

Juliet is especially performing well in my garden.

I hope that these strategies help you to have a productive tomato garden next season. Keep in touch and let us know how you and your tomatoes are doing.

Regards, 'Boscobel'