



Peaches in Michigan: A Sweet Surprise

While Georgia is famous for peaches, Michigan's climate is surprisingly well-suited for growing them. Cold winters meet chilling needs, and warm summers produce sweet, flavorful fruit. Peach trees thrive in USDA Zones 4–10, and with many varieties available, selecting the right one for your zone makes success easy.

Peach season runs from July to September. Most varieties are self-fertile, though more trees can boost yields. For best results, plant in well-drained soil with full sun (6–8 hours daily). With care, trees can live 10–20 years.

Peaches are delicious fresh or in jams, pies, smoothies, and more. Looking for more inspiration? Check out the **MSU Extension** article for creative ways to use fresh peaches and the **University of Illinois Extension** for in-depth tips on growing and caring for your peach trees.

Article by: Leah Blinstrub and photo by: Melanie Fuhrmann

The Oakland Gardener

July 2025

Monthly Plant Feature

Peppers Across the Spectrum

Article by Pat Wilson, Photos by: Melanie Fuhrmann

Peppers are among the most versatile and

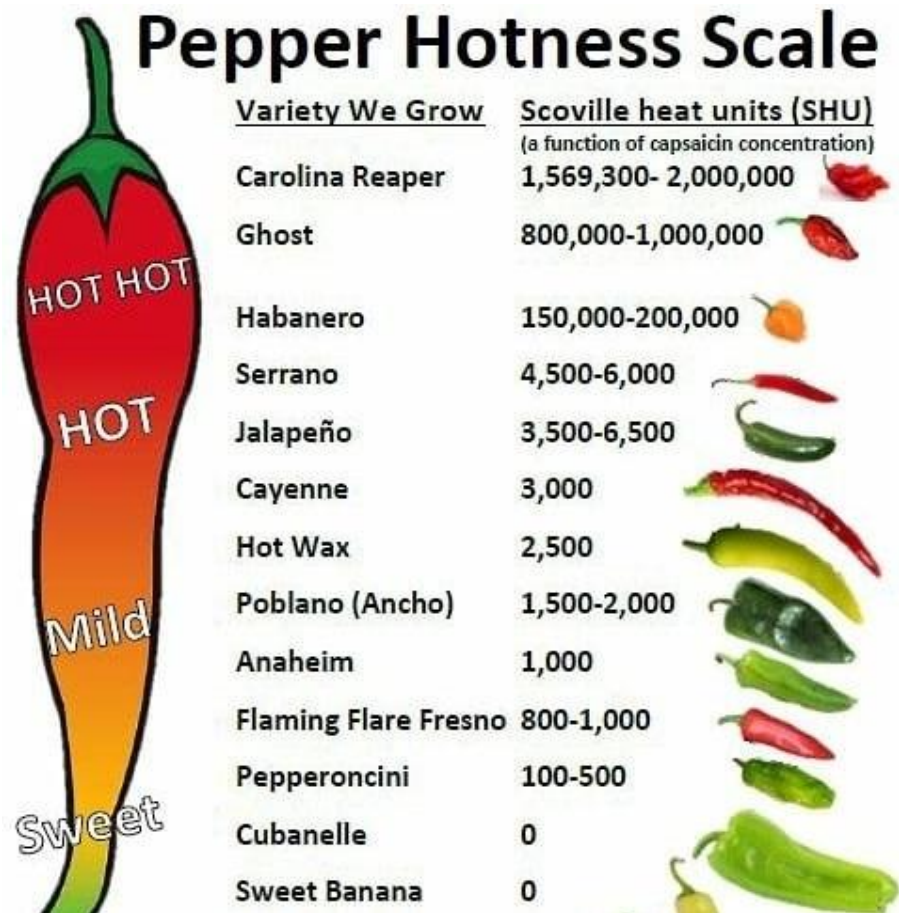


vibrant crops in the garden, offering a spectrum of colors, shapes, and flavors that appeal to chefs, botanists, and hobbyists alike. Whether you're a backyard **grower** or a horticultural expert, understanding peppers through a scientific lens adds depth to their cultivation and appreciation.

Peppers belong to the genus *Capsicum* within the nightshade family (*Solanaceae*), sharing kinship with tomatoes, eggplants, and potatoes. Of the 30+ species of *Capsicum*, five are widely

cultivated: *C. annuum*, *C. frutescens*, *C. chinense*, *C. baccatum*, and *C. pubescens*. Each species houses a dazzling array of cultivars—from the crisp bell pepper (**Red Bell Pepper Sauce recipe**) to the searing Carolina Reaper (**Hot Sauce recipe**).

Color isn't just cosmetic. Peppers transition hues as they mature—typically from green to red, orange, yellow, or purple—due to changing concentrations of chlorophyll, carotenoids, and anthocyanins. According to Dr. Paul Bosland, founder of the Chile Pepper Institute at New Mexico State University, "The color development in peppers is a visual cue of both ripeness and nutrient complexity. Red peppers, for instance, are often higher in vitamin C and beta-carotene than their green counterparts" (NMSU, 2021).



Heat in peppers comes from capsaicin, a compound concentrated in the pith and seeds.

Interestingly, *Capsicum* evolved this trait not for our daring palates, but to deter

mammals while encouraging birds (which don't react to capsaicin) to spread seeds. Dr. Josh Tewksbury, an ecologist at the University of Washington, noted in *Ecology Letters* that “capsaicin is an ecological adaptation that mediates seed dispersal by selectively targeting animal species” (*Tewksbury et al., 2008*).

For the home gardener, understanding this science pays off. Sweet peppers (*C. annuum*) need warmth to germinate—ideally 75–85°F soil. Hotter varieties often need longer growing seasons and consistent heat to fully develop their oils. In cooler zones, starting seeds indoors or using black mulch can make all the difference.

Soil health and nutrient balance are key. Peppers thrive in well-draining soil with a pH between 6.0–6.8. Michigan State University Extension recommends 0.1–0.2 lb nitrogen per 100 sq ft for peppers, cautioning not to over-fertilize, which can lead to lush foliage but sparse fruiting (*MSU Extension, 2020*).

From culinary delight to scientific marvel, peppers span the horticultural spectrum. Whether you're growing heirloom **Jimmy Nardellos** or experimenting with ghost peppers, you're engaging with a plant whose botanical journey is as rich as its flavor.

Happy harvesting—and don't forget the gloves when picking the hot ones!

Extension Master Gardener News

Visit a Smart Gardening Table Near You This Summer!

Article and Photos by: Melanie Fuhrmann

Looking for reliable gardening advice, expert tips, or simply want to chat about your flowers? Stop by one of our Smart Gardening tables this summer, where trained Extension Master Gardeners are ready to answer your plant and landscape questions!



Our Smart Gardening outreach tables are popping up at community events and farmers markets across Oakland County to bring free, science-based gardening education to you. Whether you're a beginner or seasoned gardener, you'll find resources to support a healthier garden—and environment.

□ What You'll Find at the Table:

- Free Smart Gardening tip sheets and educational handouts from MSU Extension
- Friendly Extension Master Gardeners who can help troubleshoot your lawn, landscape, and garden questions
- Information on pollinators, soil health, water conservation, composting, native plants, and sustainable gardening practices
- Details on how to get involved with gardening programs or become an Extension Master Gardener yourself!

□ **Find Us at These Upcoming Events:**

- Troy Garden Walk – Tuesday, July 9
- Oakland County Fair – Tuesday, July 16
- Oak Park Garden Tour – Saturday, July 27

You can also catch our tables regularly at **five farmers markets across Oakland County**, where we rotate throughout the season.

- Oakland County Farmers Market
- Downtown Rochester Farmers Market
- Royal Oak Farmers Market
- Farmington Farmers Market
- Walled Lake Farmers Market

□ Want a sneak peek of what we offer? Explore the full library of Smart Gardening tip sheets online:

□ **Smart Gardening Resources from MSU Extension**

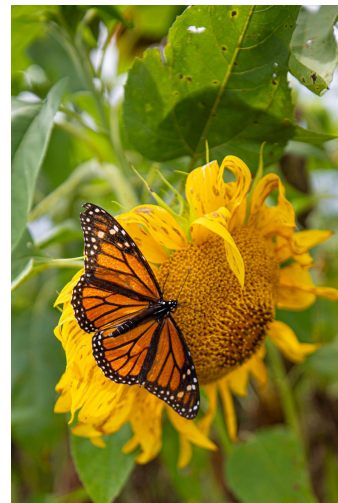
Come with your questions and leave with knowledge that helps your garden—and the planet—thrive. We hope to see you this summer!

Gardening Tips and Tricks

Work Smarter, Not Harder Sustainable Summer Gardening Advice

Article and Photos by: Annie Fairfax

Why work harder when you can work smarter? Sustainable summer gardening is a great way to save money, keep your garden healthy, and increase the return on the time, money, and love you invest in your space. Whether you garden on an apartment balcony or have a dedicated patch in your yard, these tips and tricks will help your garden flourish in the summer heat.



1. Increase Biodiversity

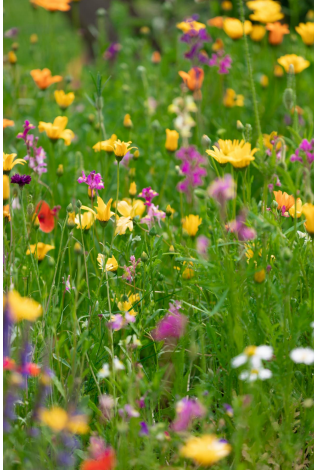
Increasing the number of plant varieties in your garden will help prevent plant loss. Should a pest or illness find its way into your garden, improving biodiversity will improve your garden's resilience.

2. Plant More Natives

In addition to the above, planting native species will enhance the hardiness of your garden. Plants suitable to your gardening zone will perform better in those conditions. They are often drought-tolerant, beneficial for local pollinators, and require less water and maintenance. They even help reduce soil erosion and depletion.

3. Right Plant, Right Place

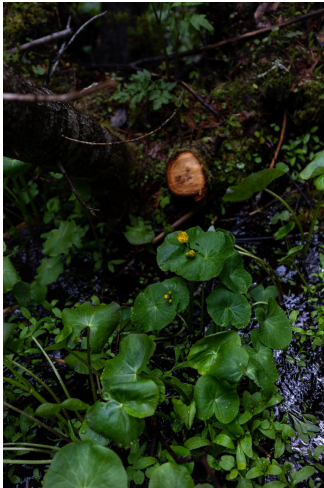
Knowing where to plant the type of plant you have is



crucial to a healthy garden. A shade plant placed in full sun will require significantly more water and fertilizer, if it survives at all. Ensure that plants are in the location that suits them best. Planting each plant in the most optimal place will give them the highest chance of thriving.

4. Support Pollinators

Native plants thriving in the right environment will support pollinators, such as butterflies, moths, bats, and other beneficial creatures. That means they'll control pests, help your garden flourish, improve the health of your garden, and increase the yield of your fruits, vegetables, berries, and flowers.



5. Conserve Water

Conserving water not only reduces your water bill but also reduces the draw on your area's resources. Some easy ways to conserve water in your summer garden include collecting rainwater, planting drought-tolerant plants, mulching to conserve ground moisture, and using drip irrigation when possible.

6. Compost

Composting takes yard and kitchen scraps and turns them into gardening gold. It not only gives your garden a nutritional boost but composting also saves money on buying garden supplements. Other benefits of composting include reducing landfill waste, bolstering soil health, and increasing the health of your plants.

7. Embrace Your Space

Many people see a lush green yard as the gold standard in landscaping, but there are better, more sustainable options. Assess your gardening space and determine the best way to utilize each section of your garden.

Struggling to manage stormwater or dealing with yard flooding? Plant a rain garden! Plant roots help absorb and redirect rainwater. They recharge groundwater, prevent pollution from reaching bodies of water, improve drainage, and help support pollinators. Michigan boasts plenty of native plants perfect for rain gardens.

Yard surrounded by trees? Start a shade garden! Selecting low-light, shade-tolerant plants that thrive beneath or around trees enhances your garden's biodiversity.

8. Reduce Pesticide Usage

Go organic when you can. By reducing the use of pesticides, you improve the health of the land, water, soil, flora, and fauna around your garden. Sometimes, simple remedies work best. If you do use pesticides, always follow the directions on the container carefully.

Keep Your Garden Thriving and Hydrated in July: Mulch, Moisture & Managing the Heat in Oakland County

Article and photos by: John Shpati



Hot dirt, summer in the suburbs! July in Oakland County means long sunny days, lush growth and a serious test of your garden's resilience. With average highs in the mid-80s and the occasional scorcher in the 90s, your plants face stress from heat, drought, and soil that doesn't always cooperate. But with a few smart moves, you can help your garden stay healthy through Michigan's peak summer stretch.

Clay Soil: Our Stubborn Base Layer

Much of Oakland County sits on glacial lakebed and till, which means **clay-rich soils are widespread**, especially in the southeast. Clay holds moisture well when it's wet; but once it dries, it shrinks, hardens, and **repels water** making it harder for rehydration. ([USGS](#)).

Pro tip: If you haven't tested your soil yet, MSU Extension offers an easy home test to get a clearer picture of what you're working with. ([MSU Home Soil Test](#))

Mulch: Your First Line of Defense

What's one of the easiest ways to protect your plants? **Mulch**. Apply **2–3 inches** of organic material shredded bark, straw, leaf mold, or pine needles around your beds. Mulch **reduces evaporation, cools soil, and keeps weeds down** ([MSU Extension](#)).

Just make sure to use the **"doughnut" method** keep mulch a few inches away from the base of stems and trunks to avoid rot and pests. MSU experts recommend the "doughnut, not volcano" method—mulch in a ring, not a mound.

And here's a tip you may not have heard: **light-colored mulches like straw** can actually **reflect sunlight** and help keep root zones cooler than dark, dyed mulches. ([MSU Extension](#))

Water Early, Water Deep

Most gardens need about **1 inch of water per week**, and up to **2 inches** during a heatwave. You can measure this with a humble tuna can, when it's full, you're there ([MSU Extension](#)).

Water in the morning, when evaporation is low and preparing the soil for when the plant's water needs are at their highest ([MSU Extension](#)).

Use **soaker hoses or drip irrigation under mulch** when possible to keep the soil moist. Keep lines under 100 feet and 1-2 inches from plant bases for best absorption. Clay soils drain slowly, so **deep, infrequent watering** beats frequent light sprinkles ([MSU Extension](#)).

Special Care for Vulnerable Plants

July's heat hits **containers, raised beds, and new plantings** hardest. These have shallow roots and dry out fast. Containers may need daily or even



twice-daily watering. Young trees and shrubs benefit from **weekly deep soaks** and a nice mulch ring (No volcanoes!). Avoid pruning or fertilizing during a heatwave let them focus on survival, not new growth.

Triage for Dry Plants

Some wilting during the day is normal. But if leaves stay droopy into the evening, your plants are struggling. Add (or refresh) your mulch layer and **water deeply the next morning**. MSU notes that mulch helps conserve moisture and keeps soil temperatures stable two things stressed roots desperately need. Skip the fertilizer until they perk up again.

Plan Ahead for the Heat

Group plants by water needs, plant **native drought-tolerant varieties** like Bottlebrush buckeye, Yarrow, and Wax Begonias. and set up a rain barrel to catch summer storms. In the fall, **top-dress with compost** to help your clay soil behave better next July (**MSU Extension**).

Gardening for Health and Wellness



Mackinaw: An Island of Gardens

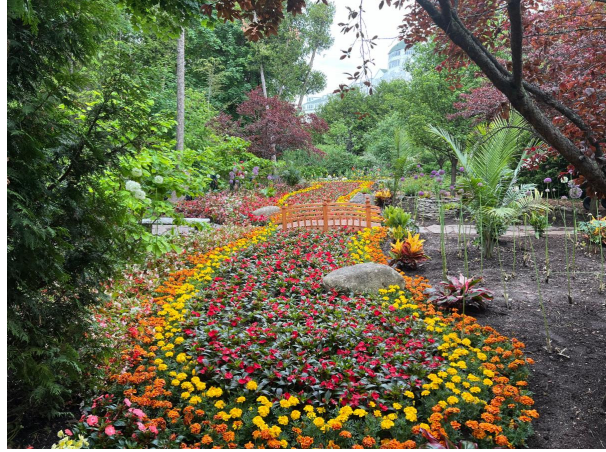
Article and Photos by: Jamiel Dado

When most Michiganders think about Mackinaw Island, they would most likely conjure up images of bicycle rides, horses, and of course, fudge. All of these elements do make up a large part of the ethos of the island, but undoubtedly leave out one major characteristic that makes Mackinaw so

special: Gardens. The garden culture on the island seems to be all encompassing, ranging from the quaint flower beds on private residences to the grandiose hotel landscaping that help attract more than a **million tourists** each year. If you happen to find yourself on this intriguing get-away and are a lover of flora and fauna, then there is no shortage of botanical sightseeing for you to experience.

Hotels and Inns - In order to accommodate the multitude of visitors, the island is home to an incredible amount of places to stay the night. A large part of the appeal of these establishments are the stunning gardens they all seem to offer the weary traveler. Of course, you don't

have to be a guest to enjoy these glorious locales. They are all quite accessible to all who want to enjoy them. The crown jewel amongst these is most certainly the Grand Hotel, which has charmed visitors since 1887. The main landscaping is a juxtaposition of old and new aesthetics, with a large sloping hill filled with native plantings that levels off to a classically manicured lawn, complete with a majestic fountain and a giant topiary depiction of a horse and carriage. As beautiful as this is, there exists an even more impressive “**secret garden**”, hidden behind the main grounds that boasts a bridge going over a “river” of flowers.



When you are done wandering the grounds of the Grand Hotel, make sure to make your way to the other end of the downtown area to see Mission Point Resort, which boasts picturesque gardens that rest right on the shores of Lake Huron. Grab a deck chair and soak in the view for awhile. Don't forget to stop and marvel at the countless other gardens that adorn all of the smaller inns between the Grand and Mission Point.



Private Residences - As you make your way up into the island's interior, you will undoubtedly notice all of the impressive gardens that Mackinaw's residents obviously take great pride in. It is definitely worth taking your time as you stroll past these homes and take notice of the lovely plantings.

Unending trails - With all the hotels, houses, and tourist attractions on the island, it's hard

to believe that over 80% of the land is a **State Park**. Originally our Nation's second National Park, it was decommissioned and made into a State Park in 1895. Surprisingly, on an island of less than 4 square miles, it contains over 70 miles of **trails**, perfect for anyone wanting to immerse themselves in nature and perhaps practice some “**forest Bathing**.” Among these trails is the Mackinaw Island Botanical Trail that is located right around the **Arch Rock** and contains handy informational placards that help identify the over 600 species of plants on the island.

Mackinaw Island is truly a gem for anyone looking to spend some time amongst the flowers and away from modern life; at least for awhile.



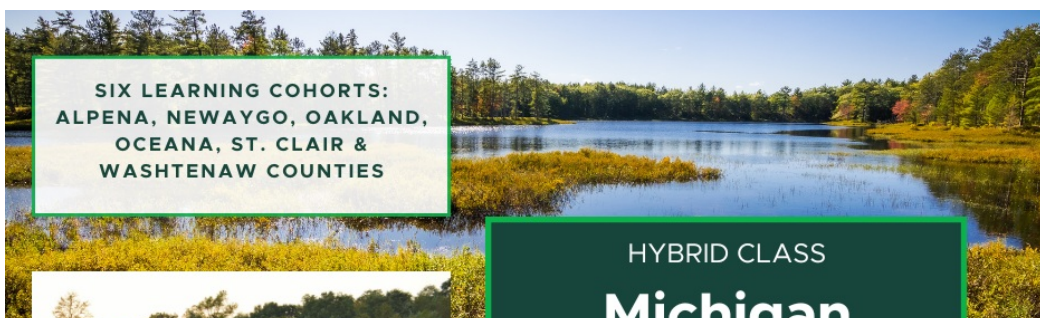
Smart Gardening is MSU Extension's campaign using earth-friendly messages to help gardeners make smart choices in their own backyards. The goal is to equip gardeners with a "tool kit" of research-based knowledge to use immediately at home. Whether choosing plants, using garden chemicals, fertilizer or applying water, gardeners need to understand the long-term impacts on their communities. For more Smart Gardening information click [here](#).



Ask Extension

Call the MSU Extension Lawn and Garden Hotline at 1-888-678-3464 (Monday, Wednesday and Friday 9am to noon)

Upcoming Events



SIX LEARNING COHORTS:
ALPENA, NEWAYGO, OAKLAND,
OCEANA, ST. CLAIR &
WASHTENAW COUNTIES



PHOTO BY JOHN BEHNKE



PHOTO BY JIAN ABLESON

HYBRID CLASS

Michigan Conservation Stewards Program

SEPTEMBER-NOVEMBER
2025

Learn the foundations of Michigan conservation and how you can apply your knowledge in your community.

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Registration



Foundations of GARDENING



Fall class meets
Tuesdays 6-8:30 pm

Learn
more:



[https://www.canr.msu.edu/
foundations-of-
gardening/course-info](https://www.canr.msu.edu/foundations-of-gardening/course-info)

- 10-weeks
- Flexible, online format
- Live weekly webinars
- Cost: \$350

Registration:
July 2-August 27,
2025

Registration



Northville 31st Annual Garden Walk

Country Garden Club of Northville

Six Charming Gardens, Vendors.
Wednesday, July 9, 2025, 9am-4pm.
Advance \$15. Tickets available June 9th-
Gardenviews, 117 E. Main and
EventBrite.com. Day of event \$20. Tickets

sold ONLY at Eventbrite.com and in the Green Space (Corner of Wing & Cady St.) behind Northville Library. Proceeds support community scholarships and local/national horticultural organizations.

734-788-9935 cgcnorthville@gmail.com

**Visit our
Website**

Wednesday, July 9, 2025 – Rain or Shine
GARDENS OPEN: 9:30 AM – 3:00 PM & 5:00 – 8:30 PM

Garden Stories 2025

Troy Garden Club's
50th garden walk!

Garden Walk Tickets:
\$15 in advance / \$18 day of walk
Purchase Advance Tickets at:

Auburn Oaks Garden Center
Bordine's Rochester Hills
Piechnik's Greenhouse & Garden Gate
Telly's Greenhouse
Troy Historic Village
Uncle Luke's Feed Store

Online Tickets:
For purchase information,
Visit the TGC website:
www.TroyGardenClubMI.com

Facebook & Instagram:
Troy Garden Club MI

NOTE:

*On garden walk day, Wednesday, July 9,
garden walk tickets will be sold
ONLY at the
Troy Historic Village.*

Free Raffle:

For ALL garden walk ticket holders
at the Troy Historic Village
on garden walk day

Free Admission: Midsummer Arts & Crafts Boutique & Plant Sale at
the Troy Historic Village – 60 W. Wattles, just west of Livernois
Open Wednesday, July 9, 9:00 AM – 6:00 PM



Garden Stories 2025 general information: 248-321-8291

Woman's National Farm & Garden Association, Inc.



Grand Prize-winning art by Jiwoo Park,
5th grade, Leonard Elementary School, Troy



The start of summer is
here when strawberries
appear



Tips for growing and
maintaining cut flowers in
your garden

Melanie Fuhrmann, Michigan State
University Extension - June 13, 2025

One of the first tastes of summer is biting into a fresh, plump, juicy strawberry. One of the easiest ways to achieve that fresh picked flavor is to freeze the berries at the peak of flavor.

Michigan State University Extension recommends four methods for preparing strawberries for freezing. These are syrup packs, sugar packs, unsweetened packs and pectin syrup.

Read
More

A well-maintained cut flower garden can bring lasting beauty to your landscape and fresh bouquets into your home all season long. Unlike ornamental flower beds designed for visual appeal, cut flower gardens are grown with a harvest in mind—and that requires a bit of extra care and technique.

By selecting the right plants and practicing a few essential maintenance steps, gardeners of all experience levels can enjoy an abundant supply of healthy, harvest-ready blooms.

Read
More



Tips for managing lawns during high temperatures

Kevin Frank, Michigan State University Extension, Department of Plant, Soil and Microbial Sciences
- June 23, 2025

Although most professional lawn care companies don't control the irrigation system on the properties they manage, it'd be a good idea to encourage homeowners or businesses to go out and observe the irrigation system operating in critical areas. Inefficiencies, misaligned or malfunctioning heads that may have been disguised by cooler

Extension Bulletin E3170 • Revised March 2025

MICHIGAN STATE UNIVERSITY Extension

carr.msu.edu/int_fresh/

Michigan Fresh

Tomato Diseases in the Home Garden

Revised by:
Barbara Gregerson,
MSU Extension educator
Chris Galbraith,
MSU Extension educator

Michigan Fresh: Tomato Diseases in the Home Garden was first published by Catherine Voth in May 2012 and revised in January 2025.

"Tomatoes are one of the most popular crops grown in home gardens. When growing tomatoes, it is important to be able to identify the different biotic or abiotic diseases that may threaten the health of the plants.

Biotic diseases, meaning diseases caused by fungal, bacterial, or other living pathogens, are mainly dependent on moisture, whether that is in the form of rain, high humidity, or overhead irrigation. Splashing water on the infected leaves from overhead watering spreads fungal spores and bacteria to nearby plants. Watering late in the day or evening causes the plants to stay wet overnight providing an environment for diseases to flourish. Limiting the risk of biotic diseases can be done by staking tomato plants for better air circulation, avoiding overhead watering, not planting tomatoes in the same place each year and disposing of infected plant material in the trash.

Some tomato varieties have been bred for their resistance to some of these diseases. Read and package carefully and look for resistant varieties if fungal or bacterial problems have been a problem in previous years. For ideas when selecting a variety, check out this comprehensive list of disease resistant tomato varieties provided by Cornell. <https://www.vegetables.cornell.edu/garden-management/diseases/factsheet/disease-resistant-vegetable-varieties/disease-resistant-tomato-varieties/>

Lawn or garden questions?
Visit msupages.msu.edu,
Call toll-free 1-888-678-3464.

Septoria leaf spot



Symptoms:
• Small, dark spots appear on the lower leaves and move up the plant
• Spots develop yellow halos
• Leaves turn yellow then brown before falling off
• The fruit is not damaged from the pathogen

Photo credit: Bruce York, University of Maine, Septoria

Early blight



Photo credit: Howard E. Schardt, Colorado State University, Insect/Plant

Michigan Fresh: Tomato Diseases in the Home Garden

June 5, 2025 - **Barbara Gregerson** and **Chris Galbraith, Michigan State University Extension**

Tomatoes are one of the most popular crops grown in home gardens. When growing tomatoes, it is important to be able to identify the

temperatures or rainfall to this point in the season will not be anymore.

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