



“What’s wrong with my vegetable plant?”

A guide to many vegetable garden plant disorders

Colorado State University Extension

Plants succumb to many different problems while we grow them in our gardens. They may get problems that have a biotic (living) origin, such as a virus, bacterial infection, fungal infection etc. However, it’s equally common that the problem is abiotic (non-living) in origin, these can include fertilization issues, moisture issues, environment (heat, cold etc.), complications with the soil etc.

This guide is designed to help walk you through where you’re seeing your problem and figuring out what might be causing the issue. Once you know the issue you can click through to one of our videos on the topic and find out more, including what you can do to resolve the issue whether it be this year or next. Happy sleuthing!

We have divided this guide into plant families, a plant family is a group of plant with similar growth habits and characteristics. Most members of the family are susceptible to similar growing issues. As you determine what family your plant is you can then ask where you’re seeing symptoms. This guide has divided symptoms into four main categories: stems, fruit/flower, leaves, and roots.

This guide goes over the most common plant families found in the vegetable garden. There are many more, if you have questions, you can reference our Colorado Vegetable guide: <https://growgive.extension.colostate.edu/colorado-vegetable-guide/>. This will provide more information on certain plant topics and specific plant varieties. Please also reach out to your local county extension office.

Scroll down to see photos and descriptions of many of the most prevalent diseases and disorders of vegetables in Colorado home gardens.

Cucurbits: Cucumber, melon, pumpkin, squash, zucchini

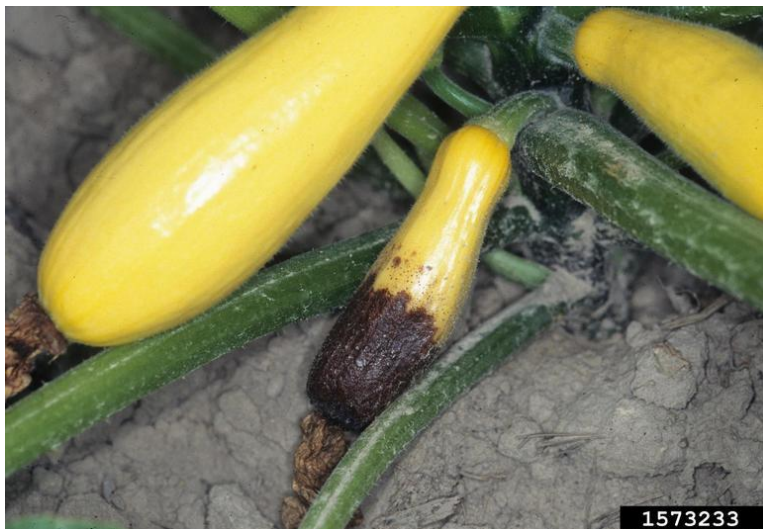
Stem/Plant	
Vine wilting – Wilting is a physiological response to the plant not being able to move water sufficiently. It can be caused by too much or too little water. If plants perk up after the heat of the day no changes are necessary. If the plant does not recover, may be a bacterial wilt. For more information: https://youtu.be/p_tB4A0RyTo	 5362953 Howard F. Schwartz, Colorado State University, Bugwood.org
Nutrition - (over and under) Leaves may become yellowed, pale, or otherwise look “off”. For more information: https://youtu.be/Yr0jnPpyYOg	 1576419 Gerald Holmes, Strawberry Center, Cal Poly San Luis Obispo, Bugwood.org

Fruit

Blossom end rot - First appears as a water-soaked spot on the blossom end of the fruit progressing to necrotic (dead) areas. Noticeable as fruit begins to size up.

For more information:

<https://youtu.be/zg4Zgxnamlc>



1573233

Gerald Holmes, Strawberry Center, Cal Poly San Luis Obispo, Bugwood.org

Poor pollination - Fruit may have a lopsided appearance during growth, small on one end and larger on the other.

For more information:

<https://youtu.be/Py7G N-Lxp8>



5602356

Gerald Holmes, Strawberry Center, Cal Poly San Luis Obispo, Bugwood.org

Blossom drop – Blossoms drop without producing fruit. (Note: this is normal for male flowers as they will not produce fruit). For information:
https://youtu.be/Py7G_N-Lxp8

No Image

Strange shape – May be caused by poor pollination, cross pollination, fasciation, or another physiological problem. For more information:
https://youtu.be/p_tB4A0RyTo



Gerald Holmes, Strawberry Center, Cal Poly San Luis Obispo, Bugwood.org

Cross pollination clarification – Cucurbit species cross pollinate readily, but the cross pollination will not be apparent in this years' fruit. Rather it will show up if the seed is saved and planted in the following growing season.

No Image

Mosaic virus – Fruit appears mottled or distorted in shape and size. Most impacts Cantaloupe, pumpkins, and squash.

For more information:

[https://youtu.be/G9W4ctkdH
M](https://youtu.be/G9W4ctkdHM)



Alton N. Sparks, Jr., University of Georgia, Bugwood.org



Alton N. Sparks, Jr., University of Georgia, Bugwood.org

Fusarium - First symptom may be of wilting leaves, but symptoms develop on fruit at the soil line. Fruit surface browns and develops sunken lesions which may occur in concentric rings until secondary pathogens begin to grow.

For more information:

<https://youtu.be/1vaabBob39g>



5602839

Gerald Holmes, Strawberry Center, Cal Poly San Luis Obispo, Bugwood.org

Early blight - Most characteristic symptom is brown or dark spots on older leaves. Circular or angular spots enlarge and may develop dark rings or ridges. Leaves may yellow, wither, and drop.

For more information:

<https://youtu.be/Pe-3YxGSRUg>



5368808

Paul Bachi, University of Kentucky Research and Education Center, Bugwood.org

Anthracnose - Infection symptoms on the fruit are sunken black spots ranging in size from ½" to ¾". Spots may have a cottony appearance (mycelia) and salmon-colored spores.

For more information:

<https://youtu.be/H242VdWLIMI>



Gerald Holmes, Strawberry Center, Cal Poly San Luis Obispo, Bugwood.org

Hail - May be easily confused with other damage once healing has begun. Divots or scars develop soon after damage occurs.



Carol O'Meara, Colorado State University Extension

Sunscald - Injury typically occurs on the top of the fruit, often facing the sun. Rind may appear water-soaked initially, developing into a bleached appearance. Can attract decay organisms.

For more information:

<https://youtu.be/wi4MKEPabNQ>



Gerald Holmes, Strawberry Center, Cal Poly San Luis Obispo, Bugwood.org

Fruit cracking – A physiological response to fluctuating environmental conditions. If cracking is large enough to enter the fruit cavity secondary pathogens may become problematic.

For more information:

<https://youtu.be/73GbhnFbaAo>



Gerald Holmes, Strawberry Center, Cal Poly San Luis Obispo, Bugwood.org

Leaf

Powdery mildew – This fungus has the potential to impact all cucurbit species. First sign of infection are pale yellow leaf spots which quickly develop into white powdery blotches. Blotches can eventually cover the entire leaf and stem.

For more information:

<https://youtu.be/o2H3vkoM6Zo>



Gerald Holmes, Strawberry Center, Cal Poly San Luis Obispo, Bugwood.org

Mosaic virus – Symptoms first appear on early leaves but may be absent on later developing leaves. Leaves grow distorted with mottled coloring. Poor vigor and branching result.

For more information:

[https://youtu.be/G9W4ctkdH](https://youtu.be/G9W4ctkdHM)
[M](#)



Gerald Holmes, Strawberry Center, Cal Poly San Luis Obispo, Bugwood.org

Bacterial wilt – Leaves first appear dull and wilt during the day. May recover at night. Eventually leaves yellow and brown at the edge and then die. Process is faster for cucumbers and melons; pumpkins and squash may take longer. May see signs of striped or spotted cucumber beetles.

For more information:

<https://youtu.be/xA43wa0Hn14>



Howard F. Schwartz, Colorado State University,
Bugwood.org

Squash mosaic virus - It can be difficult to ID the different viruses in cucurbits. Infected leaves are often mottled or have a mosaic pattern in green and yellow. Leaves may be distorted, puckered, cupped, lobed, or be thin and string-like.

For more information:

<https://youtu.be/G9W4ctkdHM>



David B. Langston, University of Georgia, Bugwood.org

Watermelon Mosaic virus - It can be difficult to ID the different viruses in cucurbits. Infected leaves are often mottled or have a mosaic pattern in green and yellow. Leaves may be distorted, puckered, cupped, lobed, or be thin and string-like. For more information: <https://youtu.be/G9W4ctkdHM>



Gerald Holmes, Strawberry Center, Cal Poly San Luis Obispo, Bugwood.org

Zucchini Yellows mosaic virus - It can be difficult to ID the different viruses in cucurbits. Infected leaves are often mottled or have a mosaic pattern in green and yellow. Leaves may be distorted, puckered, cupped, lobed, or be thin and string-like. For more information: <https://youtu.be/G9W4ctkdHM>



Gerald Holmes, Strawberry Center, Cal Poly San Luis Obispo, Bugwood.org

Alternaria – Lesions are present on leaves, typically appearing first on older leaves near the crown of the plant. Lesions begin brown and small with a green to yellow halo, becoming large, brown, necrotic areas.



Jason Brock, University of Georgia, Bugwood.org

Septoria - A less common fungus, occurs more in cool summers or late fall. Characterized by small, almost white round spots on leaves. For more information: <https://youtu.be/OX2A7slPKuo>



Bruce Watt, University of Maine, Bugwood.org

Anthracnose - Affects mostly melons, watermelons, and cucumbers. Less common on squash and pumpkins. Leaf spots are light brown, sometimes reddish and appear near veins. Dead tissue may fall out leaving holes.

For more information:

<https://youtu.be/H242VdWLIMI>



1577294

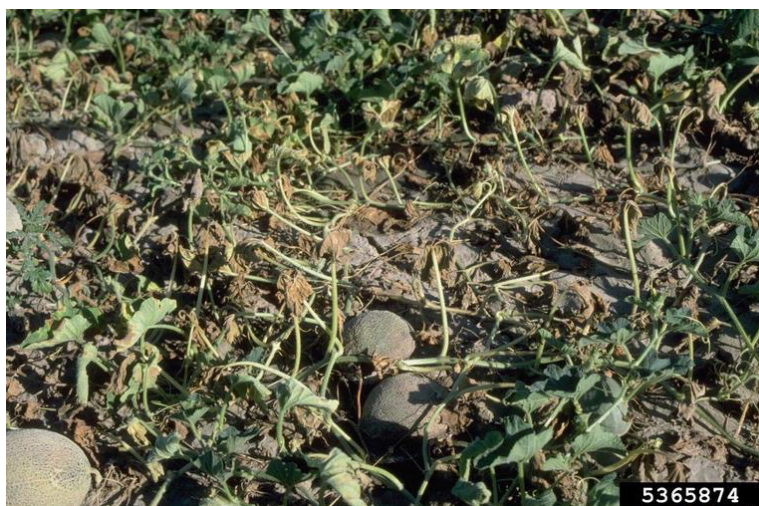
Gerald Holmes, Strawberry Center, Cal Poly San Luis Obispo, Bugwood.org

Root

Fusarium wilt - Seedlings may wilt, but this disease is more commonly expressed after fruit set. The plant crown will yellow along one runner (vine) at a time. There may be red gummy lesions. Vascular tissue internally will have a dark red-brown discoloration.

For more information:

<https://youtu.be/1vaabBob39g>



5365874

Howard F. Schwartz, Colorado State University, Bugwood.org