

## *Plant Disease Notes*

# **Tomato Pith Necrosis**

**T**omato pith necrosis, caused by the soilborne bacterium *Pseudomonas corrugata*, is a disease sometimes confused with bacterial canker. The bacterium is considered a weak pathogen on tomatoes growing too rapidly.

**Symptoms.** Initial symptoms include yellowing of young leaves. This may progress into yellowing and wilting of the top part of the plant. Black streaking may be apparent on the main stem, which often splits. When the stem is cut open longitudinally, the pith (center of the stem) will be hollow and often has a chambered (ladderlike) appearance. Profuse development of adventitious roots can be associated with the affected pith areas, and the stem may appear swollen. Plants affected with pith necrosis

do not exhibit the marginal necrosis of leaflets nor the bird's-eye spotting of the fruit characteristic of bacterial canker. Plants may die if the lower stem is affected; however, the disease usually does not progress, and plants outgrow the condition.

**Persistence and Transmission.** High nitrogen fertilization, cool night temperatures, high relative humidity, and plastic mulches all increase incidence and severity of pith necrosis. The disease frequently occurs when the first fruit set is close to mature green. Affected plants are randomly scattered in the field.

**Control.** Tomato pith necrosis may be controlled by avoiding excessive nitrogen rates.



*Your Experts for Life*

**ANR-864**

---

**Edward J. Sikora**, *Extension Plant Pathologist*, Professor, Entomology and Plant Pathology, Auburn University

Use chemicals **only** according to the directions on the label. Follow all directions, precautions, and restrictions that are listed.

---

**For more information**, call your county Extension office. Look in your telephone directory under your county's name to find the number.

---

Issued in furtherance of Cooperative Extension work in agriculture and home economics, Acts of May 8 and June 30, 1914, and other related acts, in cooperation with the U.S. Department of Agriculture. The Alabama Cooperative Extension System (Alabama A&M University and Auburn University) offers educational programs, materials, and equal opportunity employment to all people without regard to race, color, national origin, religion, sex, age, veteran status, or disability.

Web Only, **Revised Sept 2004**, ANR-864

© 2004 by the Alabama Cooperative Extension System. All rights reserved.