

2012 Update on Late Blight in Saskatchewan

In 2010 the commercial and backyard potato and tomato crops in Saskatchewan were severely damaged by Late Blight (*Phytophthora infestans*). This fungal disease thrived in the exceptionally cool and wet weather that prevailed through the summer and fall of 2010. As Late Blight carries over from season to season on infected seed potatoes there was a real risk of Late Blight reoccurring in 2011, as much of the seed being planted in 2011 would have been exposed to Late Blight during 2010. In response to this situation, the Vegetable Crops Research Program at the University of Saskatchewan and Saskatchewan Agriculture and Food instituted a Late Blight awareness and education program over the winter of 2010/2011. Commercial potato growers, as well as the general gardening public, were provided with seminars, pamphlets and electronic information on the recognition and management of Late Blight.

See: Late blight paper in the Fact Sheet page at <http://www.usask.ca/agriculture/plantsci/vegetable/factsheets.htm>

Fortunately the return of hot, dry windy conditions during the summer of 2011 did a very effective job of controlling Late Blight in Saskatchewan. The disease was only observed in a few widely scattered locations and little crop damage occurred. The general absence of Late Blight in 2011 also means that there is little risk of seed potatoes grown in 2011 carrying Late Blight over into the 2012 growing season. A healthy seed potato supply, coupled with another “typical” Prairie summer, should minimize the risk of this devastating disease reoccurring in 2012.

Vigilance will continue to be important – keep a close eye on your own crops and listen for reports of disease occurring in your area. If you suspect late blight or any other problem in your crop contact Gardenline (306 966-5865), Doug Waterer at the University of Saskatchewan (306 966-5860) or Connie Achtymichuk with Saskatchewan Agriculture at (306 787-2755) immediately.



Late Blight on potato leaves and tomato fruit