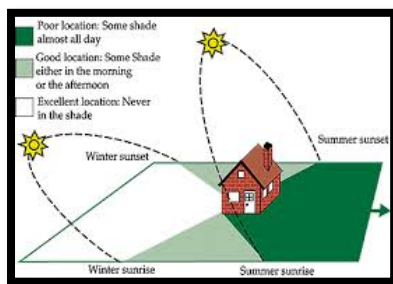


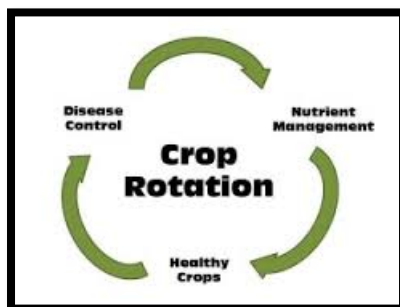
Vegetable Garden Disease Control

July is here! That typically means hot temperatures with little rainfall. This is the time of year when most people spend little time working in the garden and looking at their vegetable garden through the window because of the sweltering heat. If you are out in that garden the mosquitoes run you back in the house.

I am often asked about managing diseases in the home vegetable garden. Cultural practices are very important when trying to control diseases. To minimize disease problems in your garden you must take appropriate proactive measures. Let's look at a few of these cultural practices.



Garden site selection: Pick an area that has good drainage. Well-drained soil discourages soil-borne diseases such as root rot. If your soil is not well drained, add organic material (compost) to that site. If this is not feasible, you may want to consider the use of a raised bed. You want to be sure to use an area that has full sunlight and good air movement through the garden to improve drying conditions after wetting events.



Crop rotation: This is the movement of crops to different locations in the garden each year. The movement of the crops will not allow pathogens to build up in the soil. Crop rotation works very well against pathogens that survive for short periods in the soil on plant debris. Crop rotations should involve different families of vegetables. At least two years should be allowed between plantings of the same family.



Sanitation: This is the removal of the pathogen from the garden. Pathogens are able to survive in the plant debris left in the garden. This may take place over the winter or between successive plantings in the same year. When the plant has completed production, plant residue should be tilled under so that it can quickly start decomposing. Instead of tilling in the crop residue, you can throw it in your compost pile.

Practicing these cultural control measures will go a long way in preventing diseases in your vegetable garden. Once diseases get started, it is pretty tough to slow them down. I am pretty sure you don't want to be fighting these diseases in the July heat! Until next time, happy gardening!



Christopher Cooper