

Mighty-Milk Tomato Blight Cure

To ward off common tomato diseases, like early blight, try a sprinkling of powdered milk when you set out the tomato transplants. This simple suggestion comes from organic gardener Marion Hess, who is a special contributor for Prodigy's on-line gardening newsletter *Prodigy Gardens Newsletter*. Marion credits milk with her amazing tomato track record of no diseases, ever. "I have never even had to rotate my crop," she marvels. And the technique is gentle, Marion assures. "It won't hurt anything in your yard."

Ingredients and Supplies

- ¼ cup plus 2 tablespoons powdered nonfat milk
- ¼ cup Epsom salts (optional)
- 1 shovelful of compost (optional)
- Salt shaker or other sprinkling device
- Hand trowel

Directions

1. Prepare your garden site or planting container for planting by digging a hole.
2. Use the shaker or your hand to sprinkle the powdered nonfat milk into the planting hole. Add the Epsom salts and compost or composted manure, if desired. The Epsom salts and compost will boost your plant's overall growth and disease resistance, Marion says.
3. Mix the ingredients into the soil with the hand trowel.
4. Set your tomato plant in place and refill the hole with soil.
5. Sprinkle about 2 tablespoons additional powdered nonfat milk around the plant, then mix the milk into the soil with the trowel.

MULCH TOMATOES IN TO KEEP DISEASE OUT

A layer of mulch doesn't just keep moisture in the soil; it also can protect your tomatoes from diseases, says Dr. Frank Killebrew, extension plant pathologist at Mississippi State University. "The mulch provides a physical barrier between soil and plant surfaces and reduces the amount of disease inoculum that is splashed onto foliage, stems, and fruits during rainy periods," explains Dr. Killebrew. Mulching can prevent tomato (and cucumber) rot diseases. He suggests using black plastic or organic materials such as bark, composted sawdust, oat straw, or pine needles for mulch. 🍷

6. Add more powdered milk every few weeks throughout the growing season by sprinkling about 2 tablespoons of the powder on top of the soil. When you use your trowel (or a spade or garden fork) to mix the powder into the soil, take care not to damage roots that are growing near the soil surface.