

# Wallsend Nurseries



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## Blossom End Rot

Tomatoes and capsicums are frequently affected by a disease known as Blossom-end rot. The symptoms of this problem occur only on the fruit at the blossom end. That is, the opposite end to the stalk.

The area becomes brown, tough and sunken. Often this area will turn black after several days as well.

Secondary fungal growths may develop in this area.

Sometimes in egg tomatoes, this affected tissue might be completely internal and appear as a dark brown area inside the fruit.

Blossom-end rot is most often noticed when the fruit is about half grown.

Blossom-end rot is not in fact a fungal problem at all but is often mistaken for one. These symptoms indicate that the supply of the nutrient Calcium is not adequate to form the fruit properly. Thus, it is actually a nutrient deficiency causing the problem.

This can arise for several reasons. Firstly, there may not be enough total Calcium present in the soil. Secondly, the levels of other nutrients, which the plant takes up before Calcium, may be too high. These problems are made worse if the water supply to the plant is allowed to fluctuate.

Dry conditions and over watering can both cause problems.

Thirdly, if many leaves are forming at the same time as the fruit, the available Calcium is usually used for the formation of leaves and is not available to the fruit.

The aim in the control of Blossom-end rot, is to keep the Calcium supply to the fruit even.

The soil can be limed or have superphosphate added before the seedlings are planted out. This should supply adequate Calcium to the developing plants.

Avoid using excessive amounts of fertilizers containing Sodium, Potassium or Ammonium.

Organise the drainage so that waterlogging does not occur, and water the plants on a regular basis throughout the growing season.

Improve soil water-holding capacity by the addition of organic matter.

In areas where hot dry winds occur, windbreaks should be provided so that the plants do not lose too much water through the leaves.

A mulch should be applied to the soil surface to further retain moisture and to suppress weed growth.

In rare cases, where Calcium deficiency is a large problem, addition of chelated Calcium may be of benefit.