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Plants Suffer From All The Viruses Too, But Symptoms Highly Varied

When you come down with a virus, certain symptoms — sore throat, headache, runny nose, or rash—make you aware of the infection. But when your prize dahlia, or any other plant gets a virus, symptoms often are not so obvious.

When you get a virus, you can complain to your doctor. But a plant has no way of explaining where it aches. Virus infections have been common in plants for thousands of years. Some viruses produce no visual effect; others are easy to detect.

Dr. John Milbrath, Oregon State College plant pathologist, is studying ways to detect hidden viruses in plants, particularly fruit trees. He has developed a quick (six-week) test to discover disease-free trees for nursery stock. Earlier, it took two or more years to complete tests de-

tecting viruses in normal appearing trees.

Virus symptoms in plants may include stunted growth, curled leaves, dead or yellow spots, undeveloped fruit, low yield, or sometimes death.

One pie cherry grower in Yamhill County reported that his virus-free trees produced as much fruit when they were four years old as infected trees produced during their seventh year.

Nearly all potatoes are infected with a virus, which is harmless to those who eat the vegetable,

but which reduces crop yield about 20 per cent. The virus-infected potato displays no symptoms, but the same virus will damage tomatoes. If tobacco mosaic virus also reaches the tomato, the combination of the two viruses will kill the tomato plant. Smoking often is forbidden in

greenhouses for tobacco mosaic is readily-passed from the cigarette to the smoker's hands, and on to the plant.

Another potato virus causes the tuber to grow above ground. At first thought this appears handy for the potato picker, but Milbrath hastened to explain that sunlight causes purple-green potatoes which aren't palatable.

Another difference between plant viruses and human viruses is that people can take medicine, develop antibodies, and recover. But once a plant becomes infected, the infection's there to stay. Sprays or other treatments can't cure it.

Milbrath mentioned three ways to help prevent virus infection:

- (1) Be sure the plant doesn't have a virus when you buy it.
- (2) Control insects, for they carry viruses.
- (3) Get rid of infected plants before they transmit the virus to another plant.

Viruses are fickle. A certain virus will affect one plant one way, another plant a different way. Sometimes a plant can carry a virus without symptoms but can transmit the virus to another plant that will become seriously affected.

The plant pathologist pointed out that most dahlias carry a virus which affects tomatoes, so it's foolish to try to grow these two plants in the same garden. You shouldn't grow cucumbers or beans near gladiolus either, he cautions. Gladiolus carries viruses that will prevent a pole bean from growing more than five or six inches tall, and will cause a cucumber to shrivel.

Now that dwarf fruit trees are becoming popular, could viruses be put to practical use in dwarfing them? Milbrath says "no" since the virus would cause more harm than good.

Viruses have been around for

at least five centuries, but they're so tiny they weren't seen until about 1940 when an electron microscope was developed. An ordinary microscope can't detect them.

Evidence that viruses were present five centuries ago is found in paintings of that time. Fifteenth century artists often painted tulips with variegated flowers. Scientists have discovered that a virus causes this discoloration. It looks pretty, but eventually will dwarf or kill the plant.

Now that scientists are finding easier ways to detect plant viruses, some day they may come up with controls too. Such a scientific breakthrough would do much to increase yields of many Oregon crops, Dr. Milbrath noted.

Huge Shrine Half Done

NIAGARA FALLS, N.Y. (UPI)—The Barnabite Fathers, a Roman Catholic order that came here from Italy eight years ago, has reached the halfway point in construction of a \$500,000 outdoor shrine to Our Lady of Fatima.

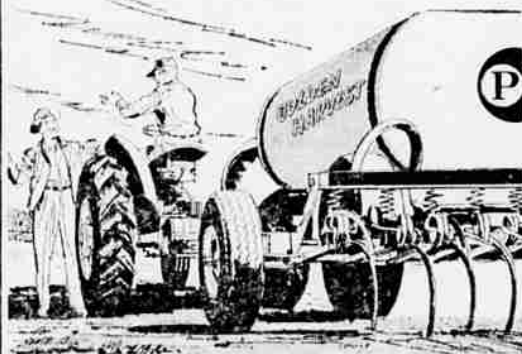
Located in the rolling farmlands of northern Niagara County, the shrine will be one of the largest of its kind in the U.S.

It is being built around a heart-shaped pond with the sidewalks laid out in the form of a cross.

JINX?

NEW YORK (UPI)—The two major leaguers pictured on the front and back covers of the 1959 "Who's Who in Baseball" had the worst seasons of their careers last year. Cover boy Bob Turley of the New York Yankees floundered to an 8-11 pitching record and Richie Ashburn, then with Philadelphia and now an outfielder for the Chicago Cubs, batted .266 just a year after winning the National League batting title with .350.

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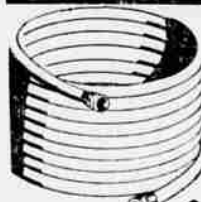
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