

**1443   
Viruses in plants**

Like any living system, plants are susceptible to viral diseases. Testing for viruses in plants is costly, so diagnosis often is based on symptoms.

[[](http://www.ext.colostate.edu/ptlk/1443f1a.html)](http://www.ext.colostate.edu/ptlk/1443f1a.html)Some common symptoms include mottling or mosaics expressed as a variegated pattern of yellow and green on the leaf, fruit or flower; curled or distorted leaf tissue that feels thick and rigid, even though the plant appears wilted; and stunting and distortion, which may appear as abnormally shortened or deformed leaves, stems or fruit. Ring spots appear as wavy rings or lines of yellow, white or red throughout leaf tissue. And cankers cause blackened areas or black streaks to appear on stems.

[[](http://www.ext.colostate.edu/ptlk/1443f2a.html)](http://www.ext.colostate.edu/ptlk/1443f2a.html)Viral particles won't survive outside its host tissue. That means they need a vector to move from one plant to another. Vectors include insects, and pruning and propagating tools that move sap from one plant to another. Viral particles also can be moved through other plant parts such as seeds, pollen or the plant itself.

[[](http://www.ext.colostate.edu/ptlk/1443f3a.html)](http://www.ext.colostate.edu/ptlk/1443f3a.html)Common viral diseases include rose mosaic virus, peony ring spot, common bean mosaic virus and tomato spotted wilt virus. Rose mosaic virus is transmitted by sap, while tomato spotted wilt is transported by western flower thrips. Not all viruses are deadly, but over time, they often debilitate a plant. For example, rose mosaic virus often makes plants more susceptible to winter injury.

[[](http://www.ext.colostate.edu/ptlk/1443f4a.html)](http://www.ext.colostate.edu/ptlk/1443f4a.html)Unfortunately, there is no chemical control for viral disease. The only way to reliably control viral diseases is to remove symptomatic plants and control the insect vector, if appropriate. When working with multiple plants, it's always best to clean pruning and propagating tools to avoid "passing" the virus from one plant to another.