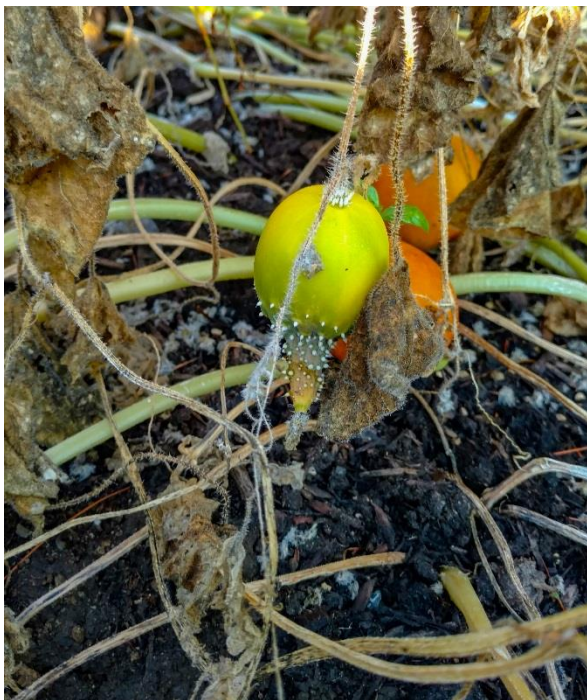


Misshapen Cucurbits (Cucumbers)

Many cucurbits, especially cucumbers, are susceptible to misshaping. Three variables can explain this phenomenon assuming no physical obstructions.



Variable 1: Improper Pollination and Pollinators

The female flowers of a cucurbit need to be completely pollinated. If it is not, the cucumber will misshapen. A failure of complete pollination leads to only part of the cucumber developing. The end of your cucumber that looks normal received enough pollen. The end that looks deformed did not,

which is usually the blossom end. Sparse pollinators, like bees, could also be the culprit. If you have low pollinator activity you can either hand pollinate or increase pollinator habitat.

The HCSWCD offers guidance on how to develop a pollinator garden. You can learn more here.

Variable 2: Improper Pollination and Heat

Heat can kill the pollen leaving it sterile. Pollinators, thus, may carry both dead and live pollen to the cucumber flower. The live pollen will pollinate part of the cucumber, while the dead pollen does nothing. This can contribute to improper pollination and, thus, a deformed cucumber.

Heat can also cause moisture stress in the cucumber. Cucumbers need plenty of water while setting and developing fruit. A lack of water during hot, dry conditions can cause the fruit to form in peculiar shapes. To avoid this make sure you provide plenty of water once the plant sets and starts developing fruit. This is ever more important as summers become hotter and drier.



Variable 3: Too Much Fertilizer

Adding too much nitrogen-based fertilizers can also result in misshaped or deformed cucumbers. Focusing on soil health and limiting the application of synthetic fertilizers is imperative. Add organic matter, such as compost, into the soil a few weeks before

planting. You can also side dress plants with rich compost throughout the season. Diluted fish emulsion will keep the plants thriving and producing throughout the season.

References

Carbon Media Group Agriculture. *What Causes Deformed Vegetables*. Ed. Admin. 11 July 2011. 2016. <<http://www.veggiegardener.com/defomed-cucumber/>>.

Missouri Botanical Garden. *Pollination Problem of Cucurbits*. n.d. 18 12 2017. <<http://www.missouribotanicalgarden.org/gardens-gardening/your-garden/help-for-the-home-gardener/advice-tips-resources/pests-and-problems/environmental/pollination/pollination-problems-of-cucurbits.aspx>>.