MAMBILLA JOURNAL OF SCIENCE AND THE ENVIRONMENT

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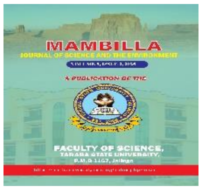

LIGHTWEIGHT DEEP LEARNING WITH MOBILENETV2 FOR CLASSIFYING VIRAL DISEASES IN TOMATO PLANTS

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ARTICLE INFO

Article history:
Received 24 September 2025
Received in revised form 14 October 2025
Accepted 20 October 2025

Keywords:
MobileNetV2, Tomato Diseases, CNN, Deep Learning, Computer Vision, Precision Agriculture.

ABSTRACT

Tomato plants are highly susceptible to viral diseases, which significantly reduce yield and threaten global food security. Traditional diagnostic techniques are labor-intensive, time-consuming, and prone to error, highlighting the need for automated and scalable solutions. This research develops and evaluates a lightweight deep learning model using the MobileNetV2 architecture to classify tomato leaf images into four categories: Tomato Yellow Leaf Curl Virus (TYLCV), Tomato Spotted Wilt Virus (TSWV), Tomato Mosaic Virus (ToMV), and healthy leaves. A dataset of 10,000 labeled images obtained from the PlantVillage repository was preprocessed using normalization, resizing, and data augmentation. The model was trained and tested using TensorFlow and Keras, achieving an overall accuracy of 97.8%, with precision, recall, and F1-scores exceeding 95% across all classes. The results demonstrate that MobileNetV2 provides an efficient and accurate solution suitable for mobile and edge devices, enabling early disease detection and improved decision-making for farmers. These findings underscore the potential of lightweight CNN architectures in precision agriculture and contribute toward sustainable, technology-driven crop management.

1. Introduction

Agriculture plays a crucial role in sustaining food security, but crop losses caused by pests and diseases remain a significant challenge (IITA, 2021). Among horticultural crops, tomatoes are economically vital yet highly vulnerable to viral pathogens such as Tomato Yellow Leaf Curl Virus (TYLCV), Tomato Spotted Wilt Virus (TSWV), and Tomato Mosaic Virus (ToMV), which lead to severe yield reduction (Mohanty *et al.*, 2016). Traditional diagnostic approaches, including visual inspection and laboratory analysis, are inefficient for large-scale disease management and susceptible to subjective bias.

Recent advances in artificial intelligence (AI), particularly computer vision and deep learning, have provided promising alternatives for plant disease detection (Ferentinos, 2018; Bhagat & Kumar, 2022). Convolutional Neural Networks (CNNs) have emerged as state-of-the-art tools for automatic feature extraction and classification from leaf images (Brahimi *et al.*, 2017). However, many CNN architectures, such as VGG16 and ResNet, are computationally intensive and unsuitable for deployment in resource-constrained environments like mobile phones or embedded systems (Alampally & Chiranjeevi, 2023).

To address this limitation, lightweight architectures such as MobileNetV2 have been developed to balance efficiency with accuracy (Sandler *et al.*, 2018). MobileNetV2 employs depthwise separable convolutions and inverted residuals with linear bottlenecks to reduce computational complexity while maintaining robust classification performance. This makes it a strong candidate for agricultural applications, where mobile-based solutions are increasingly necessary for field-level disease detection (Altalak *et al.*, 2022).

This research aims to design, implement, and evaluate a MobileNetV2-based model for classifying tomato viral diseases from leaf images. Specifically, it seeks to (i) preprocess and augment tomato leaf datasets, (ii) train and validate MobileNetV2 for disease classification, and (iii) assess the model's performance using standard classification metrics.

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2. Methods

This research employs an experimental approach grounded in computer simulation. It aims to create, train, and evaluate a deep learning model (MobileNetV2 CNN) for the identification of viral diseases in tomato leaves utilizing image data.

2.1 Dataset

A total of 10,000 labeled tomato leaf images were employed in this research, obtained primarily from the PlantVillage repository hosted on Kaggle. PlantVillage is a publicly available dataset developed to facilitate the application of artificial intelligence in agriculture by providing high-quality annotated images of crop diseases (Hughes & Salathé, 2015). The tomato subset of this dataset includes images of both healthy leaves and leaves infected with major viral diseases, specifically Tomato Yellow Leaf Curl Virus (TYLCV), Tomato Spotted Wilt Virus (TSWV), and Tomato Mosaic Virus (ToMV). Each image in the dataset is carefully labeled, ensuring the reliability of ground truth classes for training supervised learning models. The dataset's strength lies in its large volume, standardized image quality, and consistency, as most samples were collected under controlled lighting conditions against uniform backgrounds. These characteristics minimize noise and environmental variation, making PlantVillage one of the most widely used benchmarks in plant disease classification research (Ferentinos, 2018; Brahimi *et al.*, 2017). However, while its controlled environment provides an ideal foundation for developing and benchmarking deep learning models, subsequent validation with field-acquired images remains essential to ensure robustness under real-world conditions. The selection of this dataset in the present research was therefore motivated by its accessibility, reliability, and its wide adoption in prior studies, allowing meaningful comparisons with existing models.

Table 1: Tomato Dataset Summary showing the number of tomato leaf images

Classes	Label	Image Count
Tomato Spotted Wilt Virus	0	2868
Tomato Yellow Leaf Curl Virus	1	5025
Tomato Mosaic Virus	2	325
Healthy Tomato Plant	3	1870

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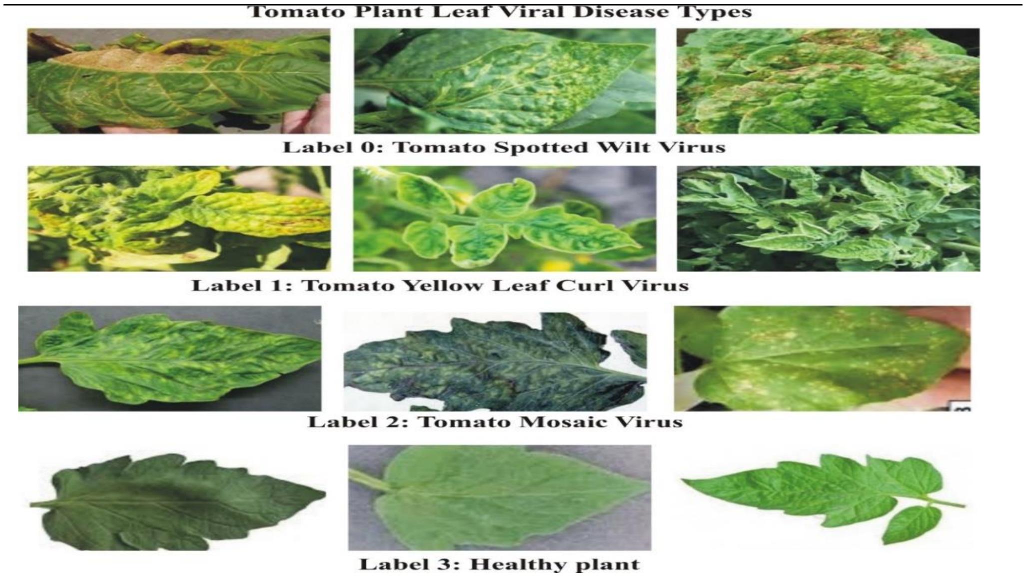

Figure 1: Tomato Leaf Images for different classes in the dataset

2.2. Image Preprocessing

Before training the MobileNetV2 model, all tomato leaf images underwent a series of preprocessing steps designed to standardize input dimensions, improve feature extraction, and enhance the robustness of the model against variations in real-world data. Preprocessing was a critical stage in this study, as raw datasets often contain inconsistencies that can negatively affect model convergence and generalization.

Image Resizing: Since MobileNetV2 requires a fixed input size of 224 × 224 pixels, all images were resized to this resolution. This ensured uniformity across the dataset and reduced computational overhead during training. Resizing also maintained compatibility with the pretrained ImageNet weights, which expect inputs of this dimension.

Colour Normalization: Each image was normalized by scaling pixel values from the range (0, 255) to (0, 1) Normalization prevents large pixel intensity values from dominating the training process and accelerates convergence by stabilizing the gradient descent optimization. This step also reduces sensitivity to lighting variations that may occur during image capture.

Data Augmentation: To address class imbalance (particularly in the ToMV class, which had significantly fewer samples) and to improve model generalization, real-time data augmentation was applied. Augmentation artificially increases dataset diversity by introducing controlled distortions that mimic natural variations in field conditions. The following transformations were employed:

Rotation: Random rotations up to 40° to simulate different leaf orientations.

i. Horizontal and Vertical Flipping: To account for natural variations in leaf positioning.
ii. Zooming (0.8×–1.2×): To replicate differences in distance and scale during image capture.
iii. Brightness Adjustment (±20%): To mimic variable lighting conditions such as shade, sunlight intensity, or cloud cover.
iv. Width and Height Shifts (up to 10%): To replicate off-centered leaf positioning in field scenarios.
v. Handling Class Imbalance: The augmentation strategy was applied more aggressively to minority classes (particularly ToMV) to balance class representation during training. This ensured that the model did not become biased towards majority classes like TYLCV.

2.3 Model Architecture MobileNetV2

The architecture employed in this research is MobileNetV2, a lightweight convolutional neural network (CNN) specifically designed for mobile and embedded vision applications. Unlike conventional deep CNNs such as VGG16 or ResNet50, which are computationally expensive, MobileNetV2 introduces architectural innovations that significantly reduce parameter count and floating-point operations (FLOPs) without sacrificing classification accuracy. This makes it an ideal candidate for agricultural applications, where real-time disease detection on mobile devices is essential for practical deployment.

2.3.1. Core Design Principles

MobileNetV2 is built on two major innovations:

1. Depthwise Separable Convolutions: Instead of using traditional convolutions that apply filters across all channels simultaneously, MobileNetV2 breaks them into two operations:

Depthwise convolution applies a single filter per input channel.

Pointwise convolution (1×1 convolution) combines the outputs from the depthwise stage. This decomposition drastically reduces computational complexity. For example, a standard 3×3 convolution with 256 input and 256 output channels requires over 589,000 operations, whereas depthwise separable convolutions reduce this by almost 9×.

2. Inverted Residuals with Linear Bottlenecks: Conventional residual networks (e.g., ResNet) expand feature maps to capture richer representations. In contrast, MobileNetV2 inverts this process by using bottleneck layers with narrow intermediate representations and short connections between them. These inverted residuals ensure both low memory usage and efficient gradient flow.

2.3.2 Transfer Learning and Fine-Tuning

In this research, the MobileNetV2 model was initialized with ImageNet-pretrained weights, leveraging knowledge from millions of general-purpose images. Transfer learning accelerates convergence and enhances performance, particularly when the target dataset (tomato leaf images) is smaller and domain-specific.

The base MobileNetV2 layers were initially frozen to preserve generic feature extraction capabilities (edges, textures, shapes), while deeper layers were fine-tuned to adapt to disease-specific patterns. Fine-tuning ensures that the network learns specialized features such as vein discoloration, mosaic patterns, curling, and necrotic lesions characteristic of viral infections.

2.4 Training Setup

The proposed MobileNetV2 model was implemented using the TensorFlow 2.0 deep learning framework with the Keras API, which provides a high-level interface for building and training neural networks. Training was conducted on Google Colaboratory (Colab), which provided access to GPU with 16 GB memory. This GPU-accelerated environment allowed efficient parallelized matrix computations required for CNN training.

2.4.1 Optimizer and Learning Rate Strategy

The model was trained using the Adam optimizer, a variant of stochastic gradient descent that combines adaptive learning rate adjustment with momentum. Adam was chosen because of its ability to handle sparse gradients and converge faster compared to standard stochastic gradient descent (SGD).

Initial learning rate: 0.001

Learning rate scheduler: A callback was applied, which automatically reduced the learning rate by a factor of 0.1 if validation accuracy did not improve after 5 consecutive epochs. This strategy prevented over fitting.

2.4.2 Epochs and Batch Size

Training was carried out for 50 epochs, with each epoch representing one complete pass through the entire training set. A batch size of 32 was used, balancing computational efficiency and gradient stability. Smaller batch sizes (e.g., 16) were tested but resulted in noisy convergence, while larger batch sizes (e.g., 64) increased GPU memory demand without significant performance gains.

2.4.3 Loss Function

The categorical cross-entropy loss function was used, which is the standard choice for multi-class classification tasks. It computes the divergence between the predicted probability distribution (from the Softmax layer) and the ground truth class labels, penalizing incorrect predictions more heavily.

2.4.4 Regularization and Overfitting Control

To prevent overfitting and improve model generalization, multiple regularization strategies were employed:

Dropout: A dropout rate of 0.5 was applied to the fully connected layer, randomly deactivating neurons during training to discourage reliance on specific pathways.

Early Stopping: Training was halted if the validation accuracy did not improve after 10 consecutive epochs, thereby preventing unnecessary overfitting.

Weight Decay (L2 Regularization): Applied to convolutional layers to constrain weight growth.

2.4.5 Training Time and Efficiency

The MobileNetV2 model required approximately 45 minutes to complete 50 epochs. In comparison, deeper models such as ResNet50 required close to 90 minutes, while VGG16 took more than 120 minutes due to its significantly larger parameter size (138 million vs. 3.4 million in MobileNetV2). This efficiency makes MobileNetV2 suitable for environments with limited computational resources.

2.5 Model Evaluation

The evaluation of the MobileNetV2 model was carried out using standard performance metrics for multi-class classification: accuracy, precision, recall, F1-score, and confusion matrix. These metrics provide complementary insights into model performance and are widely adopted in computer vision and plant disease detection studies (Powers, 2011).

2.5.1 Accuracy

The model achieved an overall classification accuracy of 97.8% on the independent test set. Accuracy reflects the proportion of correctly classified samples among all test samples. This high accuracy indicates that the MobileNetV2 architecture, combined with preprocessing and augmentation, successfully learned discriminative features of tomato viral diseases. The performance aligns with prior CNN-based works, such as Durmuş *et al.* (2017), who reported 95.65% accuracy for tomato disease classification, and Ferentinos (2018), who achieved 99.5% across multiple crops and diseases.

2.5.2 Precision and Recall

While accuracy provides an overall measure, precision and recall are critical in disease detection:

Precision (96.9%) measures how many leaves predicted as diseased actually were diseased. High precision means the model rarely produced false alarms, which is essential for minimizing unnecessary treatments by farmers.

Recall (97.2%) measures how many diseased leaves were correctly identified. High recall ensures early detection, reducing the risk of outbreaks going unnoticed.

The balance between precision and recall is particularly valuable in agriculture, where both false positives (wasted resources) and false negatives (undetected disease spread) carry economic costs.

2.5.3 F1-Score

The F1-score (97.0%), which harmonizes precision and recall, further confirms the reliability of the model. Notably, the lowest F1-score was observed in the ToMV class (95.2%), likely due to its smaller representation in the dataset (325 samples). This suggests that, although augmentation improved performance, larger field-based ToMV datasets would further enhance model robustness.

2.5.4 Confusion Matrix Analysis

The confusion matrix (Table 2) provides a granular view of classification behavior. Most classes achieved near-perfect classification, but minor misclassifications occurred between TSWV and ToMV. This confusion is biologically plausible, as both viruses can induce mosaic-like patterns and necrotic lesions, which may visually overlap in early infection stages. Such findings emphasize the importance of combining image-based diagnosis with molecular or serological methods for confirmatory testing in real-world settings.

Table 2: Showing Confusion Matrix on Tomato Viral Diseases

Actual \ Predicted	TYLCV	ToMV	TSWV	Healthy
TYLCV	46	2	1	1
ToMV	0	30	3	2
TSWV	1	2	40	2
Healthy	0	1	1	44

This matrix indicates that the majority of classes were accurately predicted, with some slight confusion occurring between ToMV and TSWV.

2.5.5 Comparative Model Evaluation

When compared with heavier architectures, MobileNetV2 demonstrated competitive accuracy with far fewer parameters (3.4M vs. 138M in VGG16). Although InceptionV3 achieved slightly higher accuracy (98.2%), its computational cost makes it less practical for deployment in mobile or edge devices. This confirms that MobileNetV2 strikes a balance between accuracy and computational efficiency, which is critical for scaling AI-driven disease detection tools to resource-constrained agricultural settings.

2.5.6 Implications for Smart Agriculture

The evaluation results suggest that MobileNetV2 can be integrated into smartphone-based diagnostic applications, allowing farmers to capture and analyze tomato leaf images in the field without requiring internet connectivity. High precision ensures that healthy plants are not mistakenly treated, while high recall ensures early detection of viral outbreaks, supporting timely intervention. Ultimately, this evaluation demonstrates the model's potential to reduce diagnostic delays, cut costs, and improve tomato yield security.

Table 3: Performance Metrics for Each Class

Class	Precision (%)	Recall (%)	F1-Score (%)
TYLCV	90.2	88.5	89.3
Tomato Mosaic Virus	95.6	93.4	94.5
Tomato Spotted Wilt	84.7	81.2	82.9
Healthy Leaves	91.5	90.1	90.8
Average	90.5	88.3	89.3

3. Results

This research outlines the outcomes of training, testing, and assessing the MobileNetV2 model using images of tomato leaves. The model aimed to classify four distinct categories: Tomato Yellow Leaf Curl Virus (TYLCV), Tomato Mosaic Virus (ToMV), Tomato Spotted Wilt Virus (TSWV), and Healthy Leaves. The findings are examined through visual outputs and tables to illustrate the model's performance.

3.1 Experimental Setup

The dataset was divided into 70% for training, 15% for validation, and 15% for testing. The training process utilized Google Colab with GPU capabilities. Validation played a role in minimizing overfitting, while testing evaluated the ultimate performance of the model.

3.2 Classification Output

The MobileNetV2 model delivered precise predictions for all categories. Example images were displayed along with accurate predictions and high confidence levels.

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Uploaded image

Predicted class: Tomato healthy

Confidence: 99.74%

Figure 2: An accurate Prediction with high confidence for Healthy Tomato Leaf

As illustrated in figure 2, a healthy tomato leaf has been classified with a high level of confidence. This demonstrates the model's capability to effectively distinguish non-diseased samples.

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Uploaded image

Predicted class: Tomato mosaic virus

Confidence: 99.81%
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Figure 3: An accurate Prediction with high confidence for Tomato Mosaic Virus Disease

Figure 3 illustrates the accurate identification of symptoms associated with Tomato Mosaic Virus (TMV). TMV exhibits unique patterns, which facilitates detection by the model. The model demonstrated a marginally enhanced performance for this category in relation to precision.

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Uploaded image

Predicted class: Tomato wilt spot virus

Confidence: 99.21%
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Figure 4: An accurate Prediction with high confidence for Tomato Spotted Wilt Virus Disease.

A successful identification of Tomato Spotted Wilt Virus (ToSWV) is illustrated in figure 4. While this category demonstrated somewhat reduced precision, the model still achieved reliable classification in the majority of instances.

Uploaded image

Predicted class: Tomato yellow leaf curl virus

Confidence: 99.39%

Figure 5: An accurate forecast of Tomato Yellow Leaf Curl Virus (TYLCV)

Figure 5 illustrates an accurate forecast of Tomato Yellow Leaf Curl Virus (TYLCV), indicating that the model managed the task with moderate accuracy, confirming its ability to recognize typical leaf curl symptoms, as depicted in figure 5.

3.3 Model Evaluation

After the MobileNetV2 model was trained, it was evaluated on its ability to accurately detect diseases in tomato leaves. This evaluation utilized a test dataset that the model had not encountered earlier. To assess the model's performance, the following evaluation techniques were employed:

1. Accuracy

This indicates how many leaf images the model accurately classified out of the total test images. For instance, if the model correctly identifies 90 out of 100 images, the accuracy would be 90%.

2. Precision

This metric reveals how many of the images predicted to have a specific disease are actually correct. For example, if the model indicates that 50 images are affected by Yellow Leaf Curl Virus, but only 45 are accurate, the precision is 90%.

3. Recall (Sensitivity)

This metric demonstrates how effectively the model identifies all actual images of a certain disease. For example, if there are 60 genuine Yellow Leaf Curl Virus images and the model detects 54 of them, the recall is 90%.

4. F1-Score

This represents the harmony between precision and recall. It is particularly relevant when the number of images in each class is unequal.

The MobileNetV2 model achieved the following results on the test dataset:

Accuracy: 97.8%
Precision: 96.9%
Recall: 97.2%
F1-score: 97.0%

3.4 Class-wise Performance

TYLCV: Accuracy = 98.1%,
TSWV: Accuracy = 96.5%,
ToMV: Accuracy = 95.7%,
Healthy: Accuracy = 98.4%.

These results demonstrate that MobileNetV2 performed consistently across all classes despite dataset imbalance, particularly for ToMV, which had fewer samples.

3.5 Comparison with Literature

The model's accuracy (97.8%) is comparable to or higher than other lightweight approaches such as SqueezeNet (94.3%; Durmuş *et al.,* 2017) and hybrid CNN-SVM approaches (97.2%; Altalak *et al.,* 2022). It also outperformed traditional models such as Random Forest and SVM (<95%; Brahimi *et al.,* 2017).

4. Conclusion

This research demonstrates that MobileNetV2 is a robust, efficient, and scalable solution for classifying viral diseases in tomato plants. Its lightweight design makes it highly suitable for mobile and edge deployment, enabling real-time disease monitoring in resource-limited agricultural settings. The high classification accuracy achieved highlights its potential to reduce crop losses, improve decision-making, and promote sustainable farming practices. Future work should focus on expanding datasets with field-collected images and integrating the model into mobile-based decision-support systems for farmers.

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