

URBAN FARMER

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Disease Control: Late Blight

Late Blight seems similar in name to Early Blight, but actually it is much worse than Early Blight. Also like Early Blight, Late Blight is a fungus-like disease that affects tomatoes and potatoes.

What is it?

Late Blight was the cause behind the Irish potato famine and should be taken very seriously. There are plenty of fungal diseases attacking the garden which are somewhat easy to treat, but Late Blight can destroy an entire field of crops.

Late Blight occurs later in the summer season, as its name implies. The fungus will develop in cool, wet weather, so it is also possible to see Late Blight earlier in the season.

Symptoms of Late Blight usually are seen first in the leaves of the plant. The symptoms look like gray spots which appear somewhat greasy. Then, a ring of white mold may appear around the spots next. The spots on the leaves will then become gray and papery, and black areas could appear on the stems. Once developed, Late Blight can move onto the fruits. Tomatoes will have greasy, gray spots like those on the leaves. When potatoes are victims to Late Blight, the potatoes develop a reddish-brown discoloration and could also get soft rot. Late Blight only lives if it has a host to feed off of, but it also can overwinter in plant debris in the garden, especially the potatoes growing left underground after the season ends. Another way the disease lasts past its prime season is if it lives in cut potatoes which are being saved to be used as seed.



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If a plant has been infected with Late Blight the fruits are still fine to eat if they aren't damaged, because Late Blight doesn't affect humans or the taste of the food.

How to cure it:

If the garden is infected with Late Blight, remove all infected plants and dispose of them. Do not compost them, as that can lead to more infection. If the garden is infected, don't save the potatoes to be used as seed potatoes. Dispose of all leaves, stems and fruits.

Once Late Blight is detected, it is too late to save that plant and probably all nearby plants. Since it is slow to show its symptoms, once you see the symptoms, the plants around the infected plant are probably already infected.

Late Blight spores can spread for miles and affect all crops within a region. If you notice Late Blight in your garden, you should alert



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the local agriculture authorities such as your Corporate Extension Service.

How to prevent it:

Because it is so damaging to not only your plants but the plants of those around you as well, it is very important to take the necessary steps in preventing Late Blight from ever happening. No plant variety is completely immune to Late Blight, but there are several resistant varieties that can be planted to help deter the disease. Some resistant potatoes are Defender, Elba and others. Some resistant tomato varieties are Juliet and Indigo Rose.



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