

URBAN FARMER

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Common pests and diseases: Salsify

When growing vegetables, it is always exciting to care for the plant throughout its growing phase and then harvest it for delicious recipes later on, but one thing to watch out for is pests and diseases. Different plants are susceptible to different types of pests and diseases, and it is important to make yourself aware so you can keep a watchful eye and also take any preventative methods to keep your plants safe throughout their lifespan.

Salsify can fall victim to several different pests and diseases, most of which also affect carrots.

Pests:

For the most part, salsify is largely resistant to most pests, though it can be affected by some of the pests that also effect carrots such as the carrot rust fly and wireworms.

Carrot rust is caused by carrot rust flies. The flies lay their eggs in the soil around where the top of the carrot or salsify plants come through. When the eggs hatch, the larvae then burrow into the soil and into the roots of the salsify, where they eat leaving rust-colored tunnels in the lower portion of the roots.

Wireworms affect the root of the salsify plant, and they will appear as shiny, thin, brown and hard-shelled worms that can reach up to an inch and a half long. These worms can remain in the larvae stage for two to five years, and they will move around in the soil depending on soil temperature and moisture. Adult wireworms don't feed much, but the larvae cause the most



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damage. Larvae feed on the salsify roots underground and can bore straight into the root. To manage wireworms, rototill the garden in the fall, which will expose the worms. Add Diazinon granules to the soil, which will provide protection for the entire season.

Diseases:

Similar to pests, salsify is highly resistant to most diseases, which is good news for gardeners who wish to grow the root vegetable. The two diseases that can cause problems include root knot and soft rot.

Root knot will cause forked roots and irregular galls throughout the plant's root system. It also affects carrots. This is caused by the nematode. To prevent this disease, plant resistant varieties of salsify and also practice good crop rotation.

Soft rot will affect the leaves of the plant, and it causes molds of varying colors to



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appear on the surface of the leaves. The molds can be black, white, brown or gray. The root will lose its firmness, and it can even become soft. The symptoms soft rot causes may look similar to damage caused by insects. In order to prevent this disease, try to avoid injuring the root during the harvest and cool the root quickly if storing it indoors.

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