

# URBAN FARMER

LOVE THE EARTH

## Common pests and diseases: Blackberries

When growing fruits and 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.

Blackberries can fall victim to several pests and diseases.

### Pests:

Some of the most common pests affecting the blackberry plant are nematodes and the Japanese beetle.

Nematodes most often affect the root of the plant first, which means the symptoms are difficult to notice. The damage increases as the nematodes increase, and only the main root is left. The plant will have a decrease in growth and fruit production if there is a nematode infestation. To prevent this problem, only plant nematode-free plants and fumigate the ground prior to planting.

Japanese beetles cause problems to many plants. On blackberry plants, they affect the roots, leaves and fruit. The beetle's larvae feed on the roots, and the adults feed on the leaves and fruits. Both larvae and adults cause damage. To prevent this problem, use insecticides.

### Diseases:

Some of the most common diseases affecting blackberries include purple blotch,



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Botryosphaeria cane canker, downy mildew, powdery mildew and more.

Purple blotch affects the branches of the blackberry plant. It causes small green sores to appear on the branches closest to the ground. The disease spreads upwards as it gets worse, and the sores will appear red or brown. The best way to prevent this problem is to plant healthy plants which haven't grown around wild blackberries.

Botryosphaeria cane canker also affects the branches, and it causes sores to appear on the buds near the main stems. They will be red/brown in color. These sores usually occur in an area that has been wounded, and the infection normally doesn't kill the plant. The best prevention method is to plant blackberry bushes resistant to this disease, and also do not over fertilize with nitrogen.

Downy mildew affects the leaves, and it will cause yellow and then purple. Leaves may fall off early, and the fruit may appear dull. Try to reduce the amount of moisture the



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plants are exposed to, as this will help prevent the disease.

Powdery mildew affects the entire plant. The leaves will be infected first and then appear wet or soggy. Once it worsens, the disease may cause white fungus to grow on the fruit. To prevent this, cut the plant back in the spring and also plant disease-resistant varieties.



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