

# URBAN FARMER

LOVE THE EARTH

## Common pests and diseases: Cucumbers

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.

Cucumbers can fall victim to several different pests and diseases.

### Pests:

Insects affecting cucumber plants include aphids, cabbage loopers and cucumber beetles.

Aphids are soft-bodied insects that bring problems to lots of plants. They create discoloration of any leaves, necrotic spots and stunted growth. Use tolerant varieties and only apply insecticides if there's a high infestation.

Cabbage loopers are pale green and will extensively damage the leaves by creating large holes. Handpick the larvae off plants, or encourage beneficial insects and birds in your garden. Apply *Bacillus thuringiensis* to kill the younger larvae.

Cucumber beetles are spotted yellow beetles that cause stunted seedlings and damaged leaves, as well as plants exhibiting signs of bacterial wilt, and scars the cucumbers. These beetles will overwinter in the soil. To prevent them, use floating row covers,



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apply kaolin clay and if necessary, use an insecticide.

### Diseases:

Diseases that can affect cucumbers include *Alternaria* leaf blight, anthracnose, belly rot, cucumber wilt and cucumber mosaic.

*Alternaria* leaf blight creates yellow-brown spots with a halo which appears on older leaves first. Leaves will curl and die. This disease often occurs in hot areas with frequent rainfall. To prevent it, rotate your cucumbers and other curcubit plants every two years and remove crop debris as soon as possible.

Anthracnose creates lesions on leaves, stems and the fruit. This disease prefers warm temperatures. To prevent it, plant resistant varieties and apply fungicides, as well as utilize crop rotation.

Belly rot creates discoloration on the fruit



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and brown mold on the rotting areas. It will cause cucumber seedlings to collapse. It prefers warm and humid conditions. To prevent this disease, till the soil prior to planting and use a plastic mulch around the plants. Use a site with good drainage and apply fungicide when plants start to vine.

Cucumber wilt will rot the seedling stems at the soil, and it will create lesions and discoloration. It favors warm and moist soil. To prevent this, plant seeds treated with a fungicide and rotate crops frequently.

Cucumber mosaic will stunt the plants severely, and the foliage will become covered in a yellow mosaic. The leaves curl down, and the leaves will be small. Fruits will be distorted and small and discolored. To prevent this, deter aphid feeding and treat aphids if they appear.

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