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Common pests and diseases: Asparagus

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.

Asparagus can fall victim to several different pests and diseases.

Pests:

Humans aren't the only living being that enjoy asparagus, and the plant can fall victim to a number of different pests. These include cutworms, the European asparagus aphid, the garden symphylan, thrips, the asparagus beetle, the Japanese beetle and more.

Cutworms typically eat the tips of the new, delicate asparagus spears, and if they eat more so on one side, it will cause the tip of the spear to curl. The European asparagus aphid injects a toxin into the plant while it feeds, which can cause a shortened life of the plant. The garden symphylan eats holes in the roots, crowns and the spears below the soil line. Thrips remove moisture from the plant, which can cause death in smaller asparagus plants. The asparagus beetle doesn't cause a whole lot of damage, but it does feed on shoots which can cause scarring and defoliation. The Japanese beetle is a



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pest that affects a lot of plants, and it feeds on the ferns of the plant.

To help prevent pests, make sure you are controlling weeds and cleaning up any leftover crop residues. Remove the old asparagus ferns at the end of the season and burn them. Treat with pesticides if the issues get out of control.

Diseases:

Some diseases that specifically affect asparagus plants include crown or spear rot, which is a soil-borne fungus. This looks like there are water-soaked lesions on the shoots, and infected crowns will have a yellow-orange color. Crown and spear rot is caused by over-harvesting, growing in soils that are waterlogged or growing in acidic soil. Apply a garden disease control to treat.

Fusarium wilt is another disease that commonly affects the asparagus plant. This causes the plants to decline in their growth, which can cause the plant to lesson its



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production. You can diagnose this issue if you notice yellow fern characteristics or discoloration around the stalks. To naturally control this disease, which is a fungus, minimize stress to the asparagus plants and don't harvest the asparagus when the production declines.

Another common disease affecting asparagus plants is rust, which is an infection which will begin in the spring. It will appear on new spears as yellow or orange pustules. This disease will overwinter, and the disease causes reduced plant vigor and also reduced yields. In order to prevent this disease, use proper irrigation and cut down the ferns at the end of the season and burn them.

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