

URBAN FARMER

LOVE THE EARTH

Common pests and diseases: Potatoes

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.

Potatoes can fall victim to several different pests and diseases.

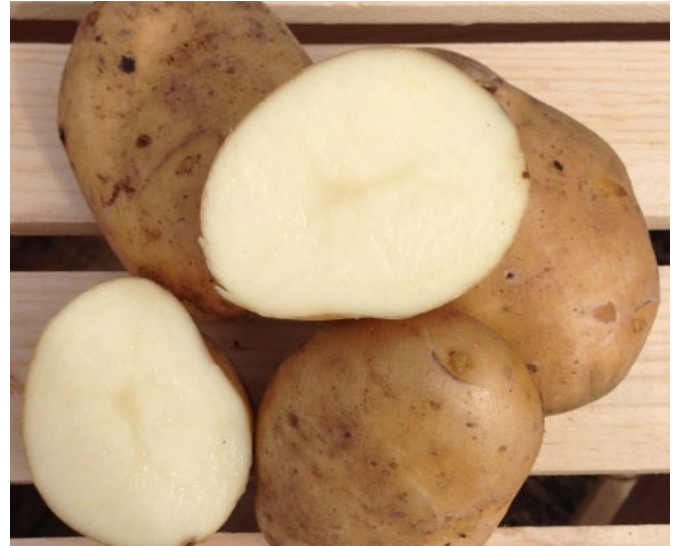
Pests:

Some of the common pests affecting potatoes include aphids, the Colorado potato beetle and cutworms.

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

The Colorado potato beetle will show feeding damage on foliage, and if these insects are left untreated, it can cause complete defoliation of the plants. The adult is a black and yellow striped beetle, and larvae will be red with black heads. Colorado potato beetles have developed resistance to pesticides, but you can control infestations by planting early maturing varieties of potatoes.

Cutworms will cause the stems of young plants to be severed at the soil line, and



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irregular-shaped holes may be eaten into the surface of the potatoes. To prevent cutworms from infesting your plants, remove all crop debris from the soil after harvest, apply stem collars covering the stems for at least 3 inches above the soil line and apply pesticides when needed.

Diseases:

Some common diseases affecting potato plants include blackleg, common scab, potato leaf roll and more.

Blackleg is also known as soft rot, and it will cause potato plants to exhibit small, water-soaked lesions at the base of the stem, and these lesions may then enlarge and can spread from the base of the stem to the canopy of the leaves. The leaves will wilt, be curled and may have a slimy texture. To control this issue, sanitize your tools and plant seed pieces that are the product of tissue culture.



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Common scab causes raised, brown lesions on the surface of the potatoes which will have a cork-like texture. There may also be deep-pitted lesions on the tuber. To control this issue, avoid planting infected tubers, utilize crop rotation, plant potato varieties that are less susceptible, treat seeds with the appropriate fungicides and keep the soil's pH low.

Potato leaf roll will cause younger leaves to roll and become yellow or pink. The lower leaves on the plant will have a leathery texture, and they will roll upwards. To prevent this disease, harvest potatoes early in temperate regions to avoid aphids, remove and destroy all infected plants, and apply the appropriate insecticides when available to reduce the spread of the disease.

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