

# URBAN FARMER

LOVE THE EARTH

## Common pests and diseases: Squash

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.

Squash can fall victim to several different pests and diseases.

### Pests:

The most common pests affecting squash include aphids, armyworms and the cabbage looper, as well as others.

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.

Armyworms will cause closely grouped holes in the foliage, and heavy feeding can cause leaves to become skeletonized. Squash will show shallow and dry wounds. You may see egg clusters on the leaves. To organically control armyworms, encourage natural enemies or apply *Bacillus thuringiensis*.

Cabbage loopers will leave large holes in the leaves and can cause lots of damage. Eggs are typically laid in singularly. To control cabbage loopers, encourage natural enemies. You can handpick them from the



[Squash seeds available at ufseeds.com](http://ufseeds.com)

plants, or apply *Bacillus thuringiensis* to kill the larvae. Stay away from chemical sprays which might harm natural predators.

### Diseases:

Some of the common diseases affecting squash include *Alternaria* leaf blight, *Alternaria* leaf spot and foot rot.

*Alternaria* leaf blight will cause small yellowish-brown spots with a green or yellow halo to appear on the older leaves first. Eventually, the lesions expand and the leaves will curl and die. To prevent this disease, practice crop rotation to reduce levels of inoculum, remove crop debris from the field as quickly as possible or plow it deep into the soil and be sure to apply the appropriate fungicides when applicable. Another method of prevention is to water plants at the base rather than overhead.

*Alternaria* leaf spot causes round or irregular lesions on older leaves. This disease prefers



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wet conditions, and it is a fungus. It can be controlled by practicing crop rotation, destroying all crop debris after harvest and applying the appropriate fungicides.

Foot rot causes leaves to wilt, and the wilting progresses to the entire plant, which will then die. This is also known as Fusarium crown. A distinctive, necrotic like rot will affect the upper parts of the taproot. The plant will break easily below the soil line. To prevent this disease, be sure to plant seed that has been treated by fungicides and practice good crop rotation.

You can find squash seeds on our website at [ufseeds.com](http://ufseeds.com)!



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