

URBAN FARMER

LOVE THE EARTH

Disease Control: Leaf Spot

Leaf Spot is one of the most common ailments a gardener experiences in their garden. Luckily, there are several treatment and preventative options to ensure Leaf Spot doesn't harm your plants.

What is it?

Leaf Spot is caused by a fungus, and it creates brown, bulls-eye-like spots on the leaves of a plant. It can occur outside as well as on indoor plants, and the fungal spores thrive when they find a warm, wet plant surface. The brown spots appear once the fungus begins to reproduce. Although most commonly brown, the spots can appear tan or black. After it begins, the spots can grow until they touch and create more of a blob than a well-defined circle. If left untreated, the leaf will turn brown and fall off the plant. The fungal spores can wait in the soil to attach themselves to another plant surface when the conditions are right. Many times, Leaf Spot will affect shade trees or ornamental plants before other plants.

One thing to be on the lookout for is to ensure the spots aren't caused by insects eating the leaves, as that can create similar symptoms to Leaf Spot.

How to cure it:

Plan on treating Leaf Spot as soon as you start to see the small brown spots begin to form. For house plants, isolate the plant so the fungus doesn't spread to other nearby plants. Remove all affected leaves and stop misting the leaves if you have been doing so. If the affected plant lives in the garden, you can go either the organic or chemical



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treatment route. Most organic treatments contain sulfur or copper octanate. For a homemade treatment, mix a half of a teaspoon of baking soda with a gallon of water and spray the solution on the leaves.

For those who do not wish to go the organic route, an all-purpose fungicide will treat the fungus.

How to prevent it:

Fungus is a common ailment which can be annoying, but that also means it is preventable. Typically, fungal diseases occur because of poor air circulation or because of an environment that is overly moist. To address these causes, place your pots or plants with enough space for good air circulation between them. When watering, water the soil and not the leaves of the plant.

When plants are grown outside, try watering them in the morning so the sun



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will evaporate the moisture from the leaves. If leaves grow in layers close together, thin them to provide better air circulation. After using garden tools such as pruners, treat them with a 1:10 bleach solution every time when you're finished using them. Before leaves bud in the spring, remove all dead debris from around the base of the plant.

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