

URBAN FARMER

LOVE THE EARTH

Common pests and diseases: Greens

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.

Greens can fall victim to several different pests and diseases.

Pests:

The most common pest affecting all different types of greens is the aphid or the leafhopper. Aphids and leafhoppers both can easily spread diseases amongst lettuce plants.

Aphids are small, soft-bodied insects and they come in colors green, yellow or purple. Leafhoppers will be green-yellow and small. If you notice either of these pests on your greens, spray them with an insecticidal soap every 10 days to discourage them. To help prevent an infestation, continuously weed your greens because unwelcome weeds may serve as the home to leafhoppers.

Greens like chicory and curly cress have less problems with pests due to their pungency. Another common insect problem comes from leaf miners. These insects feed mostly on spinach, chard, beet and turnip greens. The larvae tunnel between the leaves' tissue, and it causes tan-colored splotches on the leaves'



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surfaces. Cover your crops with screens to control this pest.

Diseases:

Some of the most common diseases affecting greens include bottom rot, tip burn and leaf spot.

Bottom rot will create rust-colored spots on the lower leaves first, and then these spots spread until the entire head has rotted. Once a plant is infected, you should harvest it, keep the usable portions and destroy the rest. Do not compost the plant. To prevent this disease, reduce crop disease by cleaning up the garden after you harvest and rotate your crops regularly.

Tip burn mostly affects head lettuce. It will cause the leaves to turn brown and then die. This problem is caused by hot weather and will most likely occur if there is fluctuation in the soil moisture. To prevent this problem, keep the plants evenly moist and plant



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resistant varieties. Also ensure your lettuce is spaced correctly so there is plenty of air circulation.

Leaf spot mostly affects greens like beets and chards. The spots will develop on the greens' leaves, and will affect the oldest leaves the worst. The leaves, once infected, will turn yellow and likely die. If you notice this issue, pick off the affected leaves and destroy them. If there is a severe infection, use fungicides to help control the problem. To prevent this from occurring, regularly rotate your crops.

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