

URBAN FARMER

LOVE THE EARTH

Common pests and diseases: Blueberries

When growing fruits and 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.

Blueberries can fall victim to several different pests and diseases.

Pests:

Some of the most common pests affecting blueberries include mites, flea beetles and Japanese beetles.

Mites cause scales on the buds, misshapen flowers and poor growth and low yields. Mites are microscopic, which means they are hard to see, so be on the lookout for the symptoms. To manage or prevent this problem, apply miticides just after harvest.

Flea beetles leave small holes in the leaves and younger plants are more likely to be targeted. If a flea beetle infestation occurs, plant growth may decrease. The damage can even kill the plant if it is severe enough. To manage or prevent this problem, utilize floating row covers and apply a thick layer of mulch.

Japanese beetles leave skeletonized leaves, and they also can affect the roots as well as growth above ground. The beetle's larvae feed on the roots, and the adults feed on the leaves and fruits. Both larvae and adults



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cause damage. To prevent this problem, use insecticides.

Diseases:

Some of the most common diseases affecting blueberries include mummy berry, powdery mildew, stem canker and more.

Mummy berry causes the plant's new leaves and shoots to droop in the spring. It also will cause the upper portion of the shoots to turn brown rapidly, and the infected shoots can even die. The infected berries will be pink or white in appearance and then turn tan. The berries can become shriveled. To manage this, prevent only disease-free plants and also bury or remove the mummified fruit. Apply foliar fungicides if you are a commercial planter struggling with this issue.

Powdery mildew will cause a fluffy white growth on the upper or lower surfaces of the leaves. Leaves may look puckered, and they can develop chlorotic spots with red borders. To manage this disease, plant resistant,



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high-bush varieties and apply the appropriate foliar fungicides if they are available.

Stem canker will cause red lesions on green stems. The lesions then become swollen. Some varieties of blueberries are more susceptible, the cankers may kill the stem. To prevent this disease, be sure to plant resistant varieties. Also, do not use infected wood for propagation.



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