

URBAN FARMER

LOVE THE EARTH

Common pests and diseases: Lettuce

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.

Lettuce can fall victim to several different pests and diseases.



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

Pests:

The most common pest affecting all different types of greens, including lettuce, 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 lettuce, 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.

Cutworms are another pest that can affect lettuce. They will eat the leaves and the stems of the plant. To rid of these pests, pick them off by hand.

A tarnished plant bug will eat the head of the lettuce, and it is oval and has black, yellow and brown markings. Alfalfa plants

attract the bug, so try not to plant lettuce near alfalfa. Use organic pesticides once you notice an infestation.

The Western-spotted cucumber beetle is another insect that can cause harm to your lettuce plants. They are yellow with black spots and can also bring several diseases such as bacterial wilt and cucumber mosaic virus to the lettuce.

Diseases:

Some of the common diseases affecting lettuce include anthracnose, bottom rot, damping off and more.

Anthracnose is a fungus which survives in the debris of infected plants, but it also can survive in the soil. Destroy infected plants as soon as possible, but don't compost them. The fungus is attracted to moist conditions, so try to keep the lettuce dry.

Bottom rot also is a fungus affecting lettuce.



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It mostly attacks adult lettuce in soil that doesn't drain well. This fungus will cause necrosis on the stems or leaves. It also causes the lettuce to wilt. To prevent this, avoid overhead watering.

Damping off is a fungus that lives in the soil and is most likely to affect young lettuce plants or seedlings. It will cause water filled spots and wilting. This disease is more common in wet or damp conditions. To prevent it from happening, plant your lettuce in well-draining soil, or properly water your plants and don't utilize overhead watering.

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