

Tomatoes - Organic

Late Blight Prevention

A Garden Guide

Late Blight is caused by the pathogen *Phytophthora infestans*. It is an oomycete or “water mold” and is found all over the world. The spores spread by wind and water and can rapidly infect plants at any stage of development. It is difficult to eradicate and spreads rapidly in cool, wet weather. Tomatoes and Potatoes are the main victims; Eggplant and Petunias can be carriers.



Planning and Planting:

- **Inspect plants frequently** - plant them where you can easily observe them.
- Plant in fertile, well-draining soil. Organic composts and fertilizers will feed the life in the soil, that life will then nourish your plants. Healthy plants are more resilient to pests and diseases.
- Use this Tomato Blight Buster Recipe to increase their resilience:
 - 1 Cup Compost
 - ½ Cup Powdered Nonfat Milk
 - ½ Cup Epsom Salt
 - MIX TOGETHER and add a handful of the mix to each planting hole.Worm compost is excellent to use because of its high microbial activity, but any compost will do.
- Avoid crowding your plants - give them plenty of space.
- Intercrop, or plant another plant type among your tomatoes.
- Avoid planting tomatoes near potatoes.
- Practice crop rotation from year to year.



Maintenance:

- Staking and pruning plants promotes air movement. Maintain excellent airflow.
- **Water early morning**, since plants are already wet from dew.
- **Water at ground level** - avoiding ALL foliage/plant parts. Avoid overhead irrigation.
- **Mulch** helps prevent pathogens from bouncing up from the soil onto the plants when it rains, and helps to maintain soil moisture.
- **Sanitation is key**. Don't touch healthy plant parts with “blighty” fingers, hands, arms, or tools. Keep hands, tools, & harvest buckets clean.

- **Do not work plants when wet.**
- Keep the garden area weed-free. Weeds (especially any Solanaceous weeds) and volunteer tomatoes can hold moisture and spread disease.
- **Organic Spray Schedule** - once every 7 days, starting at planting time.
 - Week 1: Spray with Monterey Complete Organic Disease Control (*Bacillus subtilis* var. *amyloliquefaciens*).
 - Week 2: Spray with Monterey Complete Organic Disease Control (*Bacillus subtilis* var. *amyloliquefaciens*).
 - Week 3: Spray with Copper.
 - Repeat cycle until frost. Follow all directions. **ALL** plant surfaces must be covered, with special attention to the underside of leaves. Sprays will not cure any infections, but can slow the speed of infections, buying you valuable growing time.
- **Remove and destroy “blighty” leaves.** They can be burned, buried 3’ underground, or bagged and sent to the landfill, but avoid adding “blighty” or diseased leaves and plants in your compost pile unless it is at least 120° F.
- As a stop-gap measure, some people immediately destroy the first plant they notice blight attacking.
- **Store diseased tomatoes separately** from uncontaminated fruit. Diseased ones are best used quickly, as they do not tend to store well. If you note that your plants are looking diseased but the tomatoes are still green, it can be better to just harvest them green and enjoy some fried green tomatoes.
- If all else fails, **plant disease-resistant varieties** such as Defiant, Matt’s Wild Cherry, Mountain Magic, Mountain Merit, and Plum Regal. What we grow at our farm varies from year to year, but we have grown all of these types in recent years. Note that resistant does not mean immune. Version 2.1 Jul 23



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