

PLANT PESTS, DISEASES & WEEDS

BEGINNERS GUIDE TO GARDENING



DISEASES

Plant diseases can be detrimental to your plants if allowed to spread, but there are some easy ways to not only identify and treat these diseases but also to prevent them from occurring or spreading in the first place. It all depends on what type of plants you have and where they are grown, but there are ways to reduce any harm to your plants while still being conscious of your impact on the environment and on the surrounding wildlife, too.

How do we identify plant diseases?

The first step in identifying plant diseases is paying attention to how your plant is supposed to look at different times of the year. As these are live plants, they will all look different depending on the weather, the seasons and other factors such as their aspect and location. To be able to get a headstart on identifying and treating any diseases which may, unfortunately, crop up, it is best to monitor your plants over time, to ensure that you know what they are supposed to look like.

If you are concerned, there are lots of useful guides we have which will explain how different plants look at different times of the year. Some plants bronze over in the winter due to the harshness of the cold weather, others are not supposed to. This is the distinction between whether plants are supposed to look brown or whether there may be some underlying issue which is killing off your plants.



PESTS

Pests are another inconvenience to the gardening community, and a little more difficult to control than diseases in some cases as pests will go through various life stages with lots of them laying eggs which may be undetected until they hatch and create a problem. The best practice is to inspect all of your plants prior to planting and check over them for any possible traces of pests when they are planted out. During the warmer months, this is especially crucial as this is when the pests will generally be causing their havoc.

Pests do not just include insects, there are also animals such as birds, cats and other wildlife which may be interested in your plants - particularly those which produce fruits. Ways to prevent this from happening are as follows:

Birds: The old ways are the best ways to deal with them, visual deterrents are the way forward for birds, such as reflective objects and also things like scarecrows, as silly as it may sound!

Cats: Strong smells such as citrus and coffee grounds are good to keep cats away as they cannot stand the smell - you can also get a noise deterrent to help, which will keep away other animals such as foxes, too. Some plants may also emit a strong enough smell to keep the cats at bay.

Other wildlife: Fencing can keep out other wildlife and install mesh around the plants, too, though this may seem unsightly. The best thing to do is identify the culprit first and act accordingly, targeting that specific pest.



WEEDS

Weeds can be a nuisance in the garden, spending hours pulling them up by the roots and using weed killer are some of the ways to get rid of the weeds already there, but some plants that you want to grow may be caught in the crossfire with these methods.

Removal

The first step to rid your garden of weeds and keep them gone is to remove them by the root - ensure that you dig deep enough if you need to use gardening tools to get the whole weed gone in one go otherwise you may spend a long time finding bits of roots in the soil still. You can also use a weed killer if they are not surrounding the plants that you wish to keep as these can also affect the plants you want to keep!

Prevention

There are a few ways to prevent the weeds from growing back around your plants:

- Mulching will help to keep the weeds away as this will leave not as much room for them to grow - using organic mulches such as bark or wood chips will smother weeds and stop them from being able to grow. Ensure that you keep woody-stemmed plants away from the mulch to prevent rotting.
- Weed-suppressant materials such as spun/woven materials and also plastic sheeting can be used to prevent the growth of weeds all of the different materials that you can use will have different advantages and disadvantages so it is always good to do your research and ensure that you are comparing all of the options.

