



## Disease Control No. TDC1

### Late blight, *Phytophthora infestans*

*Late blight is widespread, but in tropical areas it is mainly troublesome in highland humid areas.*

#### Host

Late blight can affect many vegetables of the Solanum species, including potatoes, tomatoes and aubergines.

#### Symptoms

The marks on the leaves start as small pale irregular spots. These spread and form large black spots which gradually lead to the death of the leaves. The marks can spread to the stem and the vegetables.

Late blight is sometimes confused with early blight (*Alternaria solani*). Early blight symptoms are more circular, larger and darker than late blight markings.

#### Description of disease

The disease spreads using spores which are dispersed by wind and rain. The fungus requires fairly cool moist conditions for spread and infection. The development of the disease increases with the presence of water on the leaves.

#### Prevention and control

Controlling blight once it has taken over is very difficult. The most important way of controlling late blight is to prevent its spread.

**Healthy plants:** Growing healthy plants helps to prevent disease in crops. Adding compost or animal manure, and sowing green manures help to improve soil structure and nutrient content to produce a healthier crop that can resist blight.

**Watering:** When watering the crops, do not water the leaves. Water at the base of the plant or water through a tube which should be pushed diagonally into the ground to reach the roots. If the leaves are infected, wetting them will help the disease to spread and will also spread the disease to the ground where, in the case of potatoes, it will infect the tubers.

**Field hygiene:** Remove and burn infected areas as soon as infection is detected.

**Crop rotation:** Rotations are helpful for controlling blight. Rotation means growing crops in a different place every year. However to prevent blight, avoid planting in plots alongside old ones, where the disease can easily spread from one to the other.

**Clean seed:** For small quantities, soak seeds in water and wood ash for 24 hours before planting or store seed in dry cow dung and wood ash to protect against blight.

**Tool hygiene:** Clean tools thoroughly before using in a different area of crops to stop the disease spreading.

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