UNIVERSITY of NEW HAMPSHIRE
COOPERATIVE EXTENSION

Family, Home & Garden Education Center
practical solutions to everyday questions
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Key Vegetable Problems

Many different factors cause vegetables to grow poorly or abnormally. Some of the more obvious problems are insect or disease related. But other problems can be related to environment, weather, nutrition, variety peculiarities - even animals and people.

Here are some common problems and corrective actions for specific vegetables, followed by a list of general problems that could affect any or all crops. When the problem is insect or disease related and may require a pesticide application for corrective action (indicated by ** in the chart below), the recommendation will be found in other bulletins published by UNH Cooperative Extension, or by calling Extension's toll-free Family, Home and Garden Education Center Info Line at 1-877-398-4769. The Info Line is staffed weekdays between 9:00 AM and 2:00 PM

Crop	Problem	Possible Causes	Corrective Action
Asparagus	Tip of spear black	Frost	Remove affected spears.
	Tip of spear brown	Fusarium wilt	Remove affected spears and relocate asparagus bed to new location if yields are seriously reduced.
Snap beans	Large, brown areas on leaves	Scorch caused by sunlight on wet leaves	None
Lima beans	Poor germination	Cool, wet soil	Plant no deeper than 1", when soil is at least 70°F.
Edible soybeans	Late maturity	Long-season variety	Select variety with earlier maturity.
Beets	Poor germination	Crusted soil or seeded too deeply	Plant about 1/4" deep and cover with light soil..
	White areas or tunnels in leaves	Leaf miner (an insect)	**
	Cavities in sides of roots	Boron deficiency	Supply boron by adding manure or compost.
Broccoli	Very stunted plants	Plants exposed to sustained low temperatures before transplanting	Keep young plants above 60°F until planted.

Crop	Problem	Possible Causes	Corrective Action
Broccoli	Strong plant, but only "button" for a head	Plants chilled in garden by near freezing	Transplants after danger of frost.
	Plants wilt during sunny days, even with sufficient water	Root maggots or clubroot	**
Brussels sprouts	Bland flavor	Harvested too early	Harvest after first freeze.
Cabbage	Very stunted plants or plants wilt	(see broccoli)	
Chinese cabbage	Going to seed	Planted too early	Plant about mid-July.
Carrots	Poor germination	Crusted soil or seeded too deeply	Plant about 1/4" deep and cover with light soil.
Cauliflower	Very stunted plants	(see broccoli)	
	Heads not white	Head exposed to sun	When head begins to form, tie outer leaves over head with a rubber band or try a self-blanching variety.
Swiss Chard	Poor germination (see beets)		
	White areas in leaves	(see beets)	
Sweet Corn	Yellow leaves	Dry weather and/or nitrogen deficiency	Add water and/or add nitrogen.
Cucumbers	Brown spots and/or jelly on fruits	Scab-caused by a fungus	Use resistant varieties and **
	Plants suddenly wilt	Bacterial wilt-spread by cucumber beetles	Control beetles and **
	Fruits with pointed ends	Lack of nitrogen and potassium	Add potassium and nitrogen.
	Bitter fruits	Stunted growth due to dry weather or nutrient deficiency	Add water and/or fertilizer.
Eggplant	Large plants but few fruits	Poor fruit set due to adverse weather or excessive nitrogen	Don't plant extra early and don't overfertilize with nitrogen.
Lettuce	Bottom rot	Soilborne disease	**
	Bitter flavor	Stunted growth, or going to seed	Add water and/or nitrogen, or harvest before going to seed.

Crop	Problem	Possible Causes	Corrective Action
Muskmelon	Late maturity	Late season varieties or soil and weather	Use earlier variety and use black plastic mulch.
	Plants suddenly wilt	Bacterial wilt-spread by cucumber beetles	Control beetles and **
Onions	Plants fail to form bulbs	Lack of vigorous growth	Provide ample water and nitrogen. Grow only varieties recommended for the Northeast.
Parsnips	Poor germination	Old seed (more than 1 year old)	Use fresh seed.
	Bland flavor	Harvested too early	Harvest after first freeze, or mulch crop and harvest next spring.
Peas	Stunted growth and plant turns yellow, beginning at bottom	Root rot	Use resistant varieties and plant in well-drained, light soil.
Pepper	Large plants but few fruits	Poor fruit set due to adverse weather or excessive nitrogen	Try hybrid varieties (and see eggplant).
Potatoes	Scab on tubers	pH too high	Plant in soil with a pH of 5.1 - 5.4.
Radish	Going to seed and no enlarged roots	High temperature	Plant earlier or in late summer.
Rhubarb	Seed stalk formation	Exact cause unknown	Remove seed stalks as they appear.
Spinach	Going to seed	Long days and high temperature	Plant very early in spring or in late summer.
Summer Squash	Young fruits rot (blossom end rot)	Fungus which thrives in wet blossoms	**
Tomatoes	Catface (rough area on blossom end)	Low night temperature (below 60EF) during fruit set	Plant a little later
	Leaf roll	Too much rain or very bright sun	None
	Blossom end rot (brown leathery spot on blossom end of fruit)	Fluctuating soil moisture	Provide uniform moisture during entire season.
	Brown or black spots on foliage that spread until infected leaves die	Early or late blight	Handpick affected leaves on a daily basis or **

General Crop Problems

Symptoms	Possible Causes	Corrective Action
Poor growth and stunted plants	Low pH and/or poor nutrition and weed competition.	Add lime and fertilizer according to soil test. Control weeds.
	Low temperature	Plant later or use soil warming methods such as black plastic.
	Insects and diseases	**
Spindly plants	Too much nitrogen or plants growing in shade	Avoid excessive nitrogen, and plant in full sun.
Holes in leaves, yellowish or distorted leaves	Insects or diseases	**
Leaves with white powdery covering or various spots- brown, red, black	Diseases	**

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