

## Symptoms of Potato Blight

The first thing you may notice are brown freckles on the leaves or sections of leaves with brown patches and a sort of yellowish border spreading from the brown patch. In a severe attack you may walk onto your patch to find all the potato foliage a rotting mass.

Tubers (the actual potato) affected by potato blight can be told by dark patches on the skin. Cutting the potato in half will reveal brownish rot spreading down from the skin. Later the entire potato will turn into a soggy, foul smelling mass.

## Prevention of Potato Blight

Potato blight fungus is generally killed by cold weather, although there are some rare resistant crossbred strains that overwinter. Otherwise, the disease reservoir is infected tubers in the ground or your sack. Wherever it comes from, it can travel miles on the wind and there is little you can do if the weather is right (above 10deg C and 75% humidity) and there has been recent rain leaving wet foliage.

There are a range of chemical treatments available to farmers but gardeners are more limited. The traditional spray was Bordeaux mixture. This isn't such a good idea as it contains copper and is hardly good for your diet although it is organically approved. Inorganic **Dithane 945** is good as long as it is applied before blight has hold.

Your best preventative is to grow a resistant variety of potato that is less affected by the blight.

## Other actions to help prevent potato blight

Try to get all the potatoes out from the ground when you harvest and so you won't leave a reservoir on your plot.

Ensure potatoes are well earthed up to protect tubers even if you get it in the foliage

Water from the base rather than spraying potatoes. If the weather is right but no rain, your artificial rain will give it a hold. Leaky hoses are a good way to water potatoes, unless you have hosepipe restrictions

## Treatment of Potato Blight

If you notice a small number of affected leaves with patches, you can try removing those and disposing of them. Burn if possible. This is a good time to make sure the potatoes are well earthed up to prevent spores getting into the tubers unless you have already done this. Spray with Bordeaux mixture or **Dithane 945** may prevent spread if applied early enough.

If you have a more serious infection, then you need to cut off all the haulm and either compost or burn it. I think composting, especially hot heaps, will be safe but burning is 100%.

Removing the foliage prevents the disease getting into the tubers, as long as they are well covered with earth. Leave the crop alone for at least two weeks to let the blight spores on the surface die and the potatoes develop a thicker skin.

After harvest, check regularly for signs of blight and remove any suspect tubers at once from your store.

### Good news

The recent development of Sarpo Hungarian varieties of potato are extremely blight resistant and these are coming onto the market now. Sarpo Mira was the first to be generally available but this is not an all round potato. I've tried the Sarpo Axona variety and found it not as blight resistant as the Mira and little different in taste or type. Still looking for a Sarpo that will make a good chip.

There are other varieties of potato with varying degrees of blight resistance listed below. The Sarpo types are exclusive to Thompson & Morgan.

<b>Best Potatoes for Foliage Blight Resistance</b>					
<b>First Earlies</b>	Orla	Premiere			
<b>Second Earlies</b>	Cosmos	Nadine			
<b>Main Crop</b>	Cara Sante	Romano Kondor	Sarpo Axona Sarpo Mira Lady Balfour	Symfonia Verity	Pentland Dell Pentland Squire
<b>Best Potatoes for Tuber Blight Resistance</b>					
<b>First Earlies</b>	Orla	Colleen			
<b>Second Earlies</b>	Cosmos	Nicola			
<b>Main Crop</b>	Cara	Record Sante	Sarpo Axona Sarpo Mira	Kondor Lady Balfour	Valor Picasso

Source <http://www.allotment.org.uk/vegetable/potato/potato-blight.php>