Garden Plant Diseases

Composited off the Internet

By Gareth Richards

Garden Plant Diseases UK: ID Guide

Identify and treat 12 common garden plant diseases UK gardeners face. Covers fungal, bacterial, and viral symptoms with monthly prevention calendar.

UK gardens face 12 major plant diseases, with fungal pathogens causing 85% of cases. Powdery mildew activates above 15C at 60-80% humidity. Blight (Phytophthora infestans) destroys tomato and potato crops within 7-10 days in warm, wet weather above 10C. Rose black spot (Diplocarpon rosae) overwinters on fallen leaves and reinfects from April. Copper-based fungicides prevent 70-80% of fungal infections when applied before symptoms appear.

Garden plant diseases cost UK gardeners an estimated 200 million pounds annually in lost crops and replacement plants. From the white dusting of powdery mildew on roses to the devastating brown collapse of potato blight, fungal, bacterial, and viral diseases attack gardens from March through to November.

This identification guide covers the 12 most common garden plant diseases UK gardeners encounter, explains the science behind how they spread, and ranks treatments by proven effectiveness. Whether you are dealing with black spot on roses or blight on your tomatoes, understanding the pathogen's lifecycle is the key to stopping it.

How to identify common garden plant diseases

Accurate identification is the first step to effective treatment. Applying the wrong fungicide wastes money and allows the real pathogen to spread. UK garden diseases fall into three categories: fungal (85% of cases), bacterial (10%), and viral (5%). Each category shows different symptoms and requires different control strategies.

Fungal diseases: the 85% majority

Fungal pathogens dominate UK garden disease. They reproduce through microscopic spores that travel on wind, water splash, and contaminated tools. Most need moisture on leaf surfaces to germinate, which is why wet summers produce worse outbreaks. Key identification features include powdery or downy coatings, spots with defined margins, and visible mould growth.

Bacterial diseases: wet and slimy

Bacterial infections enter plants through wounds, pruning cuts, and natural openings like stomata. They produce soft, wet, slimy lesions that often smell unpleasant. Bacterial canker on cherries and plums oozes amber-coloured gum. There are no curative sprays for bacterial diseases in the UK garden market. Prevention through hygiene and resistant varieties is the only reliable approach.

Viral diseases: distortion and mosaic

Viral diseases cause distorted growth, mosaic patterns on leaves, stunting, and colour breaks in flowers. Cucumber mosaic virus alone affects over 1,200 plant species. Viruses spread through sap-sucking insects (primarily aphids), contaminated tools, and infected seed. There is no treatment. Remove and destroy infected plants immediately to prevent spread to healthy neighbours.

The 12 most common UK garden diseases

These 12 diseases account for roughly 90% of the disease problems UK gardeners face. Each entry includes the pathogen name, affected plants, symptoms, and proven treatments.

1. Powdery mildew

Powdery mildew (Erysiphales order) produces a white or greyish powdery coating on leaves, stems, and flower buds. Over 400 UK plant species are susceptible. Roses, courgettes, peas, apples, and gooseberries are the most frequently affected.

Unlike most fungal diseases, powdery mildew does not need free water on leaf surfaces. It thrives at 15-27C with relative humidity of 60-80% and dry leaf surfaces. Crowded, poorly ventilated plantings are most vulnerable. Severely affected leaves yellow, curl, and drop prematurely.

Treatment: Spray with potassium bicarbonate solution (5g per litre of water) or sulphur-based fungicide at 7-14 day intervals. Remove and dispose of badly affected shoots. For a full treatment protocol, read our powdery mildew treatment guide.

2. Black spot (roses)

Black spot (Diplocarpon rosae) is the most damaging disease of garden roses in the UK. Circular black or dark brown spots with fringed margins appear on upper leaf surfaces from May onwards. Spots enlarge to 10-15mm diameter. Affected leaves yellow and drop, sometimes defoliating the bush entirely by August.

Spores overwinter on fallen leaves and bare stems. Rain splash carries them up to 30cm onto new growth in spring. The fungus needs 7 hours of continuous leaf wetness at 15-25C to germinate.

Treatment: Rake and remove all fallen rose leaves in autumn. This single action reduces reinfection by 60-70%. Apply a systemic fungicide (tebuconazole or triticonazole) every 14 days from April to September on susceptible varieties. Choose resistant varieties like Rosa ‘Absolutely Fabulous’ or ‘Roald Dahl’ for new plantings.

3. Potato and tomato blight
Blight (Phytophthora infestans) is the most destructive disease for UK potato and tomato growers. The pathogen triggered the Irish Potato Famine of the 1840s and remains a serious threat today. Brown patches appear on leaves, often starting at the tips and margins. A white fuzzy growth develops on the underside in humid conditions. Stems develop dark brown lesions. Tomato fruits rot with a firm brown rot. Potato tubers develop a reddish-brown granular rot beneath the skin.

Smith Period conditions trigger blight: two consecutive days with minimum temperature above 10C and at least 11 hours of relative humidity above 90%. The Hutton Criteria (used by the Met Office since 2007) refined this to two consecutive days where minimum temperature is 10C+ and there are 6+ hours of relative humidity above 90%.

Treatment: Spray with copper fungicide (Bordeaux mixture) preventively from late June. Once symptoms appear, remove and destroy all affected foliage immediately. Cut potato haulms to ground level and wait 3 weeks before lifting tubers. Grow blight-resistant varieties like ‘Sarpo Mira’ (potato) or ‘Crimson Crush’ (tomato).

Fungal disease identification: powdery mildew, black spot, and blight show distinct visual symptoms that aid correct diagnosis.

4. Rust

Rust fungi (order Pucciniales) produce distinctive orange, yellow, or brown powdery pustules on the undersides of leaves. Over 5,000 species of rust fungi exist worldwide. In UK gardens, the most common hosts are roses, hollyhocks, pelargoniums, leeks, garlic, plum trees, and fuchsias.

Rust spores need free water on leaf surfaces for 4-8 hours at 10-20C to germinate. Spores travel long distances on wind, up to several kilometres. Severe infections cause premature leaf drop, weakened growth, and reduced yields in edible crops.

Treatment: Remove infected leaves promptly. Improve air circulation by spacing plants correctly. Apply myclobutanil or tebuconazole fungicide at 14-day intervals during active growth. For leek rust, there is no approved chemical treatment. Grow resistant varieties and ensure wide spacing (15cm between plants).

5. Grey mould (botrytis)
Grey mould (Botrytis cinerea) is the most common post-harvest disease and a frequent garden pathogen. Fluffy grey-brown mould develops on flowers, fruits, leaves, and stems. Strawberries, raspberries, tomatoes, lettuce, and ornamental flowers are the most affected crops.

Botrytis thrives in cool, damp conditions at 15-20C with high humidity above 85%. It enters through wounds, dead tissue, and fading flower petals. Greenhouse crops are particularly vulnerable due to poor air circulation. For greenhouse-specific controls, see our greenhouse pest and disease guide.

Treatment: Remove dead flowers and damaged tissue promptly. Space plants for good airflow. In greenhouses, ventilate to keep humidity below 85%. Remove and destroy all infected material. Apply a systemic fungicide as a preventive measure on strawberries before flowering.

6. Honey fungus
Honey fungus (Armillaria mellea) is the most destructive fungal disease of trees and shrubs in UK gardens. It kills more woody plants than any other single pathogen. Clusters of honey-coloured toadstools appear at the base of affected trees in autumn. White fungal sheets (mycelium) grow beneath the bark. Black bootlace-like rhizomorphs spread through soil at a rate of approximately 1 metre per year.

Privet, birch, willow, and ornamental cherries are highly susceptible. Yew, holly, box, and beech show good resistance.

Treatment: There is no chemical control. Remove dead and dying plants including the stump and as many roots as possible. Install a vertical barrier of heavy-duty polythene or butyl rubber to 45cm depth around the affected area to prevent rhizomorph spread. Replant with resistant species.

7. Clubroot
Clubroot (Plasmodiophora brassicae) affects all brassica crops: cabbages, broccoli, cauliflower, Brussels sprouts, kale, swede, and turnip. Roots swell into distorted, club-shaped galls. Plants wilt in warm weather despite adequate moisture. Growth is severely stunted and yields collapse.

The pathogen survives in soil for 15-20 years as resting spores. It thrives in acidic soil (pH below 7.0) and wet, poorly drained conditions. Once established, clubroot is virtually impossible to eradicate.

Treatment: Raise soil pH to 7.2-7.5 with garden lime (calcium carbonate) applied at 250-500g per square metre. Improve drainage. Start brassica seedlings in sterile compost in modules, planting out when root systems are well established. Practice strict crop rotation with a minimum 4-year gap between brassica crops on the same ground.

8. Apple and pear scab
Scab (Venturia inaequalis on apples, V. pirina on pears) produces dark, scabby lesions on fruit, leaves, and twigs. Affected fruit develops rough, cracked patches that spoil appearance and storage quality. Leaves show olive-green to black spots with a velvety texture.

Spores overwinter on fallen leaves and release ascospores from February to June during wet weather. The critical infection period is bud burst to petal fall (roughly March to May). Scab needs 9 hours of continuous leaf wetness at 17C to establish.

Treatment: Rake fallen leaves in autumn (reduces primary inoculum by 80%). Apply copper fungicide at leaf fall and again at bud burst. Prune to open the canopy for air circulation. Choose resistant varieties such as ‘Discovery’, ‘Red Falstaff’, or ‘James Grieve’.

9. Coral spot
Coral spot (Nectria cinnabarina) produces distinctive salmon-pink to orange raised pustules (1-3mm diameter) on dead and dying wood. It enters through pruning wounds, dead stubs, and damaged bark. Magnolia, maple, elaeagnus, and pyracantha are commonly affected. Coral spot can kill branches and, in severe cases, entire shrubs.

Treatment: Prune out all affected wood, cutting back to at least 15cm below the last visible pustule. Make clean cuts with sharp, disinfected tools. Remove all dead wood and pruning debris from the garden. Do not leave cut branches stacked as they become a spore source.

10. Bacterial canker (stone fruit)
Bacterial canker (Pseudomonas syringae pv. morsprunorum and P. syringae pv. syringae) affects cherries, plums, damsons, and other Prunus species. Sunken, flattened areas of bark ooze amber-coloured gum. Leaves develop shot-hole symptoms: small brown spots that fall out leaving circular holes. Branches die back in spring and summer.

The bacterium enters through leaf scars in autumn and pruning wounds. Never prune stone fruit in winter. Prune only in June to August when wound healing is fastest and bacterial populations are lowest.

Treatment: Cut out cankered branches at least 30cm below visible symptoms. Apply wound paint to large cuts. Spray with copper-based fungicide (Bordeaux mixture) at 50% leaf fall, then again at complete leaf fall, and a third time at bud burst. Resistant rootstocks include Colt and Gisela 5.

11. Downy mildew
Downy mildew (Peronosporales order) differs from powdery mildew. It produces yellowish patches on upper leaf surfaces with a greyish-purple fuzzy growth underneath. Lettuce, spinach, brassicas, onions, grapes, and pansies are the most affected UK garden plants.

Downy mildew needs cool, wet conditions: 5-20C with free water on leaves for 6-12 hours. It is most severe in spring and autumn. Unlike powdery mildew, it cannot survive dry conditions.

Treatment: Improve air circulation by thinning plantings. Water at the base, never overhead. Remove and destroy infected leaves. Apply copper-based fungicide as a preventive spray. Grow resistant lettuce varieties like ‘Maureen’ and ‘Nymans’.

12. Phytophthora root rot
Phytophthora species (beyond P. infestans) cause root and crown rot in a wide range of plants. Rhododendrons, heathers, yew, and many shrubs are susceptible. Plants wilt suddenly, often dying within weeks. Roots turn brown-black and soft. The pathogen thrives in waterlogged, poorly drained soil.

Treatment: Improve drainage. Remove and destroy affected plants with surrounding soil. Avoid replanting susceptible species in the same location for at least 5 years. Phosphite-based products (potassium phosphonate) provide some protective benefit when applied as a foliar spray before infection.

Disease comparison table

Disease	Powdery mildew
Pathogen type	Fungal
Key symptom	White powder on leaves
Most affected plants	Roses, courgettes, peas, apples
Peak season	Jun-Sep
Spread method	Wind-borne spores

Disease	Black spot
Pathogen type	Fungal
Key symptom	Black spots with yellow halo
Most affected plants	Roses
Peak season	May-Oct
Spread method	Rain splash (30cm)

Disease	Blight
Pathogen type	Oomycete
Key symptom	Brown patches, white underside
Most affected plants	Potatoes, tomatoes
Peak season	Jul-Sep
Spread method	Wind and rain

Disease	Rust
Pathogen type	Fungal
Key symptom	Orange/brown pustules
Most affected plants	underneath Roses, hollyhocks, leeks
Peak season	May-Oct
Spread method	Wind (kilometres)

Disease	Grey mould
Pathogen type	Fungal
Key symptom	Fluffy grey-brown mould
Most affected plants	Strawberries, tomatoes, lettuce
Peak season	Apr-Oct
Spread method	Airborne spores

Disease	Honey fungus
Pathogen type	Fungal
Key symptom	White mycelium under bark
Most affected plants	Trees and shrubs
Peak season	Year Round
Spread method	Soil rhizomorphs (1m/yr)

Disease	Clubroot Protist
Pathogen type	Fungal
Key symptom	Swollen, distorted roots
Most affected plants	All brassicas
Peak season	Mar-Oct
Spread method	Soil-borne (survives 20 yrs)

Disease	Apple scab
Pathogen type	Fungal
Key symptom	Dark scabby lesions on fruit
Most affected plants	Apples, pears
Peak season	Mar-Jun
Spread method	Rain splash

Disease	Coral spot
Pathogen type	Fungal
Key symptom	Pink-orange pustules on dead wood
Most affected plants	Magnolia, maple, pyracantha
Peak season	Year Round
Spread method	Spores from dead wood

Disease	Bacterial canker
Pathogen type	Bacterial
Key symptom	Oozing amber gum, shot-hole
Most affected plants	Cherries, plums, damsons
Peak season	Oct-Feb entry
Spread method	Rain splash, tools

Disease	Downy mildew
Pathogen type	Oomycete
Key symptom	Yellow patches, grey fuzz below
Most affected plants	Lettuce, onions, brassicas
Peak season	Apr-Jun, Sep-Nov
Spread method	Wind and water

Disease	Phytophthora root rot
Pathogen type	Oomycete
Key symptom	Sudden wilt, brown roots
Most affected plants	Rhododendrons, yew, heathers
Peak season	Year-round
Spread method	Waterlogged soil

How plant diseases spread: the science

Understanding how pathogens spread explains why certain conditions trigger outbreaks and why specific treatments work. This section covers the lifecycle science that separates effective disease management from guesswork.

Fungal spore germination

Most fungal spores need three conditions to germinate: moisture, temperature, and a susceptible host. The moisture requirement varies by species. Powdery mildew needs only humid air (60-80% relative humidity). Black spot needs 7 hours of continuous leaf wetness. Blight needs 11 hours at 90%+ humidity. This is why overhead watering causes more disease than drip irrigation. Every time you wet the foliage, you restart the germination clock.

Temperature thresholds determine when disease becomes active. Below 5C, almost all fungal pathogens are dormant. Between 10-15C, rust and downy mildew become active. At 15-27C, powdery mildew and grey mould peak. Above 25C, blight sporulation slows. UK summers typically sit in the 15-22C range, which is the optimum window for most garden diseases.

The critical mistake: treating symptoms, not cycles
Most gardeners spray when they see symptoms. By that point, the fungus has already produced millions of spores and infected neighbouring plants. Preventive applications are 70-80% effective versus only 30-40% once symptoms are visible. The spore-to-symptom lag is typically 7-14 days, meaning visible infection on Monday was caused by spores landing two weeks earlier. This is why calendar-based preventive spraying outperforms reactive treatment.

Temperature and disease activity

Temperature range	Active diseases	Risk level
Below 5C	None (dormant)	Minimal
5-10C	Downy mildew, canker bacteria	Low
10-15C	Blight, rust, scab	Moderate
15-20C	Grey mould, downy mildew peaks	High
15-27C	Powdery mildew peak	High
20-25C	Black spot, rust peak	Very high
Above 25C	Blight slows, powdery mildew persists	Moderate

Treatment hierarchy ranked by effectiveness

Not all treatments are equal. This table ranks disease control methods by proven effectiveness and explains when to use each one. The Role column tells you whether a method is your primary weapon, a maintenance tool, or a last resort.

Treatment	Preventive copper fungicide
Effectiveness	70-80% disease prevention
Time to act	7-14 days before infection
Cost per season	8-15 pounds
Best for	Blight, scab, canker, downy mildew
Role	Primary prevention

Treatment	Autumn leaf clearance
Effectiveness	60-70% reinfection reduction
Time to act	One session in November
Cost per season	Free (labour only)
Best for	Black spot, scab, rust
Role	Primary prevention

Treatment	Resistant varieties
Effectiveness	50-90% fewer infections
Time to act	Permanent
Cost per season	Plant cost only
Best for	All fungal diseases
Role	Long-term strategy

Treatment	Potassium bicarbonate spray
Effectiveness	50-60% curative effect
Time to act	Within 48 hours of symptoms
Cost per season	3-5 pounds per season
Best for	Powdery mildew
Role	First response

Treatment	Systemic fungicide (tebuconazole)
Effectiveness	60-70% curative/preventive
Time to act	7-14 day intervals
Cost per season	10-15 pounds per season
Best for	Black spot, rust, scab
Role	Maintenance treatment

Treatment	Sulphur spray
Effectiveness	40-50% preventive effect
Time to act	7-14 day intervals
Cost per season	5-8 pounds per season
Best for	Powdery mildew, scab
Role	Supplementary

Treatment	Neem oil
Effectiveness	30-40% broad-spectrum
Time to act	Weekly application
Cost per season	8-12 pounds per season
Best for	Mild fungal infections
Role	Supplementary only

Treatment	Removing infected material
Effectiveness	Variable (slows spread 40-60%)
Time to act	Immediate
Cost per season	Free
Best for	All diseases
Role	Emergency response

Root cause analysis: why diseases keep coming back
Treating visible symptoms without addressing root causes guarantees the same problems return every year. These four underlying factors explain persistent disease pressure in UK gardens.

Poor air circulation
Overcrowding is the single biggest root cause of fungal disease in UK gardens. Plants packed tightly together trap humid air around foliage, creating the sustained moisture period that fungal spores need to germinate. A rose bush planted 40cm from a fence with a lavender hedge in front will develop black spot every year regardless of spraying. Space roses 60-90cm apart and 45cm from walls. Thin congested growth in late winter to open the centre.

Overhead watering
Watering from above with a hose or sprinkler wets foliage unnecessarily. Every drop on a leaf surface contributes to the moisture period that fungi need. Drip irrigation or watering at the base eliminates 80% of the leaf wetness that foliar diseases depend on. Water in the morning so any accidental splash dries before evening temperatures drop. Never water in the evening, as leaves stay wet overnight when dew formation extends the moisture period to 12+ hours.

Neglected hygiene
Fallen leaves, dead stems, and unpruned wood harbour overwintering disease spores. A single infected rose leaf left on the soil through winter produces enough black spot spores to reinfect the entire bush the following spring. Clubroot resting spores survive 15-20 years in contaminated soil. Dirty secateurs transfer bacterial canker between pruning cuts.

Clean tools between plants with a 10% bleach solution (1 part household bleach to 9 parts water) or methylated spirit. This takes 10 seconds and prevents cross-contamination between healthy and infected plants. Remove all crop debris at the end of the growing season. Hot composting at 60C+ for 3 days kills most fungal spores. Council green waste collections typically achieve these temperatures.

Soil conditions

Waterlogged soil creates conditions for Phytophthora root rot, clubroot, and other soil-borne pathogens. Heavy clay soils in the Midlands and northern England are particularly vulnerable. Improve drainage by incorporating organic matter (well-rotted manure or garden compost) at 5-10cm depth annually. Raise beds 15-20cm above ground level on clay soils. Test soil pH and adjust to 6.5-7.0 for most crops (7.2-7.5 specifically for brassica beds to suppress clubroot). Garden Organic provides additional guidance on organic disease prevention methods.

Effective disease prevention: autumn leaf clearance, tool hygiene, and proper plant spacing reduce infection rates by 60-70%.

Month-by-month disease calendar for UK gardens

This calendar shows when key diseases become active and which preventive actions to take each month. Timings are based on Midlands conditions. Northern gardens run 2-3 weeks later. Southern gardens run 1-2 weeks earlier.

Month	Active diseases	Action to take
January	None (dormant)	Plan resistant variety orders for spring planting
February	Bacterial canker (stone fruit)	Apply copper spray to peaches, cherries at bud burst
March	Scab spore release begins	Spray fruit trees with copper at bud burst. Check for canker
April	Black spot, downy mildew activate	Begin fortnightly fungicide programme on roses. Monitor lettuce
May	Powdery mildew, rust appear	Check roses, peas, gooseberries weekly. Spray at first sign
June	Blight watch begins (Smith Periods)	Monitor Blightwatch alerts. Spray outdoor tomatoes and potatoes
July	Peak blight risk, grey mould on strawberries	Remove lower tomato leaves. Pick strawberries promptly. Ventilate greenhouses
August	All fungal diseases peak	Continue spray programmes. Remove severely infected plants. Water at base only
September	Grey mould on autumn crops, rust on leeks.	Check leeks for rust. Reduce greenhouse humidity Thin autumn lettuce

Month	Active diseases	Action to take
October	Honey fungus fruiting bodies appear	Identify and map affected areas. Remove dead stumps
November	Leaf fall: disease reservoir clearing	Rake ALL fallen leaves from under roses and fruit trees. Copper spray fruit trees
December	Dormant season Clean and disinfect greenhouse glass, staging, and tools	Order copper fungicide for spring.

Common mistakes when dealing with plant diseases

These five errors account for most treatment failures. Avoiding them saves time, money, and plants.

Spraying after symptoms appear and expecting a cure

Most garden fungicides are preventive, not curative. Once you see black spot, blight, or scab symptoms, the fungus has already penetrated the leaf tissue. Spraying at this stage only protects new, uninfected growth. Preventive applications made before symptoms appear are 70-80% effective. Reactive sprays once symptoms are visible drop to 30-40%. Start spray programmes based on the calendar above, not on visible symptoms.

Composting diseased material in cold heaps

Many diseases survive cold composting. Black spot, clubroot, and blight spores persist at temperatures below 50C. Adding infected rose leaves to a cool garden compost heap distributes spores around the garden when you spread the compost. Hot composting (above 60C sustained for 72 hours) kills most pathogens. If your heap does not reach 60C, bag diseased material for council green waste collection instead.

Watering in the evening
Evening watering leaves foliage wet through the night. Dew formation adds further moisture. This creates 10-14 hours of continuous leaf wetness, well above the 7 hours needed for black spot germination and the 6 hours needed for downy mildew. Water in the morning so splash moisture evaporates within 2-3 hours as temperatures rise.

Ignoring resistant varieties
Modern plant breeding has produced vegetable varieties with genuine disease resistance. Potato ‘Sarpo Mira’ resists blight, rose ‘Chandos Beauty’ shrugs off black spot, and apple ‘Discovery’ tolerates scab. Planting susceptible heritage varieties without committing to a spray programme guarantees annual disease problems. Check the RHS Plant Finder database for resistance ratings before purchasing.

Failing to rotate crops
Growing brassicas in the same bed year after year allows clubroot to build up to devastating levels. Planting tomatoes in the same greenhouse border every season invites soil-borne Fusarium and Verticillium. Rotate vegetable families on a 4-year cycle minimum. In greenhouses, grow tomatoes in fresh grow bags annually or use ring culture systems to avoid contaminated soil.

Frequently asked questions
What is the most common plant disease in UK gardens?
Powdery mildew is the most common. It affects over 400 plant species and appears in every UK garden at some point. The white powdery coating on leaves develops when daytime temperatures reach 15-27C with humidity between 60-80%. Roses, courgettes, peas, and apple trees are the most frequently affected plants.

Can diseased plants infect other plants in the garden?
Yes, most fungal diseases spread between plants. Spores travel on wind, water splash, contaminated tools, and hands. Black spot spores splash up to 30cm in rain. Rust spores travel kilometres on wind. Always clean secateurs between plants with a 10% bleach solution or methylated spirit to prevent cross-contamination.

Should I remove diseased leaves from plants?
Remove diseased leaves immediately. Prompt removal slows spore production by 40-60% and limits spread to healthy tissue. Cut back to clean, healthy growth. Dispose of diseased material in council green waste or a hot compost heap above 60C. Never leave diseased foliage on the soil surface.

Are copper fungicides safe for organic gardening?
Copper fungicides are approved for organic use. Bordeaux mixture (copper sulphate and lime) has been used since the 1880s. Apply at the recommended dilution rate to avoid copper build-up in soil. The Soil Association permits copper-based products at a maximum of 6kg per hectare per year. Always follow label instructions.

Why do my tomatoes get blight every year?
Blight spores overwinter in infected potato tubers. If you grow potatoes nearby, volunteer plants from missed tubers release spores that infect tomatoes. Grow tomatoes under cover in a greenhouse or polytunnel, space plants 60cm apart for airflow, and remove lower leaves below the first truss to reduce splash infection.

What causes white powder on plant leaves?
White powder indicates powdery mildew infection. The fungus thrives at 15-27C in dry conditions with humid air. Unlike most fungal diseases, powdery mildew does not need leaf wetness to germinate. Improve air circulation, water at the base, and apply sulphur or potassium bicarbonate sprays at the first sign of infection.

When should I spray fruit trees to prevent disease?
Spray fruit trees at three key times. Apply copper fungicide at leaf fall in November to kill overwintering spores. Spray again at bud burst in late February or early March. Apply a third treatment at petal fall in April or May. These three applications prevent 70-80% of scab, canker, and brown rot infections.

Now you can identify and treat the most common garden plant diseases in UK gardens, read our vegetable pests and diseases guide for crop-specific protection strategies.

How to Contact the Editor

If you have comments or you know I have given wrong advice then please contact me by email at

gareth.richards@yeovil-allotments-association.co.uk

If you have something to contibute or have a say on allotment life, then please use my email to send your contributions.

I am going to process the magazine issue once a month, so if there are comments you would like to make they can be answered in future editions.

I would like to add that most of the articles are taken off the web and some well known gardening and allotments magazines have been read in the making of our magazine content.

We also have our own website at :

www.yeovil-allotments-association.co.uk

where you can find this magazine as well as a catalogue

Happy Allotmenteering and best wishes,

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