

Late blight (*Phytophthora infestans*) occurs commonly each year in many places around the United States and the world. There are steps we, as home gardeners, market farmers and commercial growers alike, can take in order to reduce late blight inoculum surviving the winter.

The following tips for fall will help prevent the spread of late blight (*Phytophthora infestans*). They are different from summer management techniques:

- If possible, start with new seed potatoes in the spring that have been certified disease-free.
- Cull any potatoes after harvest that are suspect before putting them into storage – potato tubers with late blight will have a dry, reddish brown rot in the flesh.
- Tomato and Potato Crop Residues – Turn soil in garden or fields so that crop residues can readily decompose – late blight needs live tissue to survive. As long as tissues decompose or die (no living plant tissue) then the late blight on that plant tissue will be killed as well.
- Cull potatoes in storage throughout fall and winter months that are suspect.
- At harvest, try to dig up all possible tubers – any volunteer plants that emerge in the spring will have to be culled.
- Cull piles should be thin enough to freeze solid over the winter.
- Cull piles can also be managed so that they heat up significantly – this is achieved by adding the proper mix of brown and green ingredients to your compost pile and turning. A compost thermometer can be helpful.
- In the northeast US, only one type of late blight is found, so all measures outlined above will help prevent late blight from overwintering. In some parts of the US and the world two different types of late blight can be found in the same location thus allowing the pathogen to 'mate' and produce oospores which are capable of surviving temperature extremes. In this case crop rotation is very important in reducing oospore inoculum on possible plant hosts. Crop rotation is important in all growing areas, no matter the size of your garden/field.