



## GETTING THE MOST OUT OF YOUR EGGPLANTS! (Part 2)

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While eggplants are moderately heavy feeders, you can overdo it on the nitrogen. If lush green leaves are out of control but there are very few flowers, too much nitrogen fertilizer may be the issue.

Cool weather is the nemesis of the eggplant grower. If temperatures are consistently at or below 60°F, there won't be much of a harvest. The sweet spot for fruit production is between 75 and 90°F. And even though eggplant is known to thrive in hot weather, if temperatures are steadily above 95°F, plants will stop setting fruit. Don't give up, the fall will bring a whole new crop.

Be mindful to water strategically, especially when fruits are developing. Water deeply inconsistently, to a depth of 6 inches or more. This trains the plant to develop deeper roots.

Use high quality mulch as well, this is different than other vegetable crops and it will help maintain moisture levels.

Fruits are heavy, so cage plants from the beginning in the same way you would cage a tomato. This will keep leaves off the ground, which will help to reduce chances for disease and keep fruits from becoming deformed.

Eggplants, much like tomatoes and peppers, have flowers with both male and female parts and are considered self-pollinating. However, wind and pollinators can only help. With that said, give plants a little shake here and there to further improve chances for pollination.

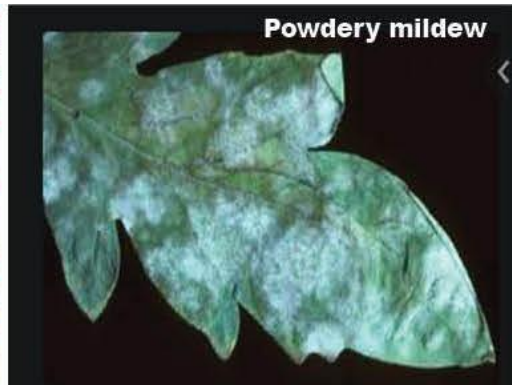


#### **PESTS AND DISEASES TO KNOW ABOUT**

Flea beetles especially have a real talent for finding any and every eggplant you grow. Okay – so that might be dramatic. But seriously, their tiny holes (pictured here) discoloring the leaves let you know they have found your stash. But with some perseverance, and some horticultural Molasses, they are easily controlled.

Other pests that like to make a meal out of eggplant include cutworms and spider mites. Cutworms, which are moth larvae, do their damage at night, which is obvious come morning. Spider mites can barely even be seen and hide on the undersides of leaves. If you turn over a leaf and see a white web-like residue, it is likely spider mites.

Fortunately, healthy plants can handle a few unwanted critters. Grow them under row covers until they are large enough to withstand damage. If action must be taken, consider horticultural molasses, diatomaceous earth or insecticidal soaps.



As for diseases, prevention is key. Powdery mildew and verticillium wilt have been known to affect eggplant and are difficult to control once present. Verticillium wilt is caused by soil-borne fungi that can survive for more than ten years, even without a host present. Once infected, remove plants immediately; and drench area with Humic Acid.

Avoid growing host plants, which include other members of the Solonaceae family like tomatoes and peppers, in the impacted area for at least three years.

### WORTH THE EFFORT

Have you grown eggplant before? What's your secret to success? Let us know and connect with us at [homeshowGardenPros.com](http://homeshowGardenPros.com).



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