



Cucurbit downy mildew spore counts increase

For the last five years, Michigan pickle growers have battled with downy mildew and were advised by the MSU Plant Pathogen Dept. to use fungicides in late June. Downy mildew is resistant to many commonly known fungicides and is difficult to overcome. Many of our gardeners have enjoyed cucumbers and pickling cucumbers this season without any problems.

However, I have noted a few plants that potentially have downy mildew and recommend disposing of the entire plant into the garbage - not the compost pile.

Downy mildew, caused by the fungal organism *Pseudoperonospora cubensis*, is most destructive to cucumber and cantaloupe, though all cucurbits are susceptible. Symptoms first appear as pale green areas on the upper leaf surfaces. These change to yellow angular spots. A fine white-to-grayish downy growth soon appears on the lower leaf surface.

Infected leaves generally die but may remain erect while the edges of the leaf blades curl inward. Usually, the leaves near the center of a hill or row are infected first. The infected area spreads outward, causing defoliation, stunted growth and poor fruit development. The entire plant may eventually be killed.

Baking powder can be used as an **organic alternative fungicide** against downy and powdery mildews, botrytis and alternaria leaf-spot.

For more information go to <http://www.attra.org/attra-pub/bakingsoda.html>.

Harvest tips

Cabbage: Cut the heads when they are solid, but before they crack or split. In addition to harvesting the mature heads, you can harvest a later crop of small heads or sprouts that develop on the stumps of the cut stems. The sprouts will be 2 to 4 inches in diameter and should be picked when they are firm.

Calling all bird lovers

Date: Tuesday, July 27

Time: 7 p.m.

Where: St. Mary Organic Farm, under the Elm Tree

Join Loretta LaPointe, Interim Recreation Superintendent from

Monroe Recreation Department in observing and recording birds that live or pass through the IHM grounds.

Loretta will cover using binoculars, birding books and bird watching basics. No prior birding knowledge is needed. If you are a birding expert, we'd love to have you! Bring your binoculars and bird book, if you have them, or just bring yourself.

Any guesses on where this bird is from?



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Harvest tips cont.

Snap Beans are best when the pods are firm and snap readily, but before the seeds within the pod develop. The tips should be pliable.

Carrots are ready for use when they are young, crisp and 1/2 to 1 inch in diameter. The sugar content is higher in mature carrots, but the younger ones are more tender. Carrots planted in the summer may be left in the ground until a killing frost. A straw mulch can be placed over the row so that the carrots can be harvested until the ground freezes solid.



Beets are ready when they are 1-1/4 to 2 inches in diameter. The beet tops can also be eaten as greens. The leaves should be 4 to 6 inches long.

Broccoli should cut when the buds are compact but before they turn yellow or open into flowers. Leave 5 to 6 inches of stem attached. Side shoots that develop in the axils of the leaves can also be used.

Cucumbers

Although cucumbers require a lot of care in the field, they are usually not demanding in the kitchen. This is an excellent opportunity to vine out into the exciting world of cucumber cookery. Having been around the world a time or two - from India to Rome to the Americas - cucumbers are featured in a plethora of ethnic dishes.

Storage - Store unwashed cucumbers in a sealed plastic bag in the vegetable crisper bin for about a week. Keep cucumbers tucked far away from tomatoes, apples and citrus - these give off ethylene gas that accelerates cucumber deterioration.

Handling - You can do a lot of fancy things to the skin of a cucumber, and when it is young, fresh and unwaxed, it really only needs to be thoroughly washed. However, if the skin seems tough or bitter you can remove it; if the seeds are bulky, slice the cucumber lengthwise and scoop them out.

I have found, through years of practice, that people garden in order to make something grow; to interact with nature; to share, to find sanctuary, to heal, to honor the earth, to leave a mark. Through gardening, we feel whole as we make our personal work of art upon our land.

Julie Moir Messervy, *The Inward Garden*

Marinated Cucumber Salad with Dill

This delicious salad from Denmark has no sauce, no oil, no dressing - yet each delicate slice of cucumber is bursting with tangy-sweet juiciness. You can use the slices as you would any sweet pickles - in an egg salad sandwich or layered on a veggie burger, and of course, this dish is great with hotdogs. For a unique twist, replace dill with the feathery leaves of fennel. *Angelic Organics Kitchen.*

Serves 6 to 8

3 large cucumbers (about 2 pounds), peeled, very thinly sliced

1 tablespoon coarse sea salt or kosher salt

2/3 cup white or apple cider vinegar

1/2 cup water

1/2 cup sugar

1/2 teaspoon salt

1/4 teaspoon white pepper

2 tablespoons finely chopped fresh dill or 1 tablespoon dried dill

1. In a large bowl, use your hands to thoroughly but gently mix the cucumbers and salt.
2. Place a plate on top of the cucumbers, then place a 2- or 3-pound weight (such as a large can of vegetables) on the plate to weigh it down (this helps release the salt). Set the cucumbers aside to marinate at room temperature for several hours or in the refrigerator overnight.
3. Drain the cucumbers thoroughly in a colander and pat them dry on a clean dish towel. Rinse and dry the bowl, then return the cucumbers to the bowl.
4. Mix the vinegar, water, sugar, salt, and pepper in a small pot over medium heat and bring to a boil. Reduce the heat and simmer, stirring often, until the sugar is dissolved, about 3 minutes. Remove from heat.
5. Pour the hot vinegar mixture over the cucumber slices. Sprinkle with the dill and mix to combine.
6. Chill for at least 3 hours. Drain and serve.

Excerpted from *Farmer John's Cookbook: The Real Dirt On Vegetables: Seasonal Recipes and Stories from a Community Supported Farm* by Farmer John Peterson & Angelic Organics.

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