

## **Veggie Urban Farm and Community Garden in Rhode Island**

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### **Scouting Your Veggie Field and Garden**

Keeping your vegetable farm or garden healthy means staying a step ahead of pest and diseases. Regularly scouting your plants for disease and insect pests to keep your crops healthy.

#### **Why Scout?**

Scouting allows you to detect problems early, before they cause significant damage. Early intervention minimizes crop loss and allows you to use more targeted control methods, reducing use of pesticides.

#### **Scouting tools**

- **Grab your tools:** A hand lens for examining small insects and damage, a clipboard for notes, and a sealable bag for collecting samples are helpful tools.
- **Walk your farm/garden:** For larger and gardens, walk the field in a W or Z pattern to ensure even coverage. In smaller plots, inspect each plant carefully.
- **Focus on details:** Look at the tops and undersides of leaves, stems, fruits, and flowers. Check for discoloration, wilting, holes, frass (insect droppings), and unusual growths.
- **Record your findings:** Note the type of damage, affected plant parts, and the number of affected plants. This helps track pest populations and disease spread.



**Figure 1.** Grower scouting his plants using a magnifying glass. Photo credit Keiddy Urrea-Morawicki

## Signs of Trouble



**Figure 2.** Leaf spot symptoms on cucumber. Photo credit Keiddy Urrea-Morawicki

**Diseases:** Look for discolored spots, yellowing, browning, leaf deformation, wilting, cankers/ galls, or general dieback.

**Insects:** Chewing damage, holes in leaves, presence of insects or eggs, and stunted growth can indicate insect problems.

**Environmental or nutritional problems:** Yellowing, stunting, browning on the edges of the leaves. They can look like disease product applications.



**Figure 3.** Insect chewing on potato plant, Photo credit Keiddy Urrea-Morawicki

## Identification Resources

- Submit a sample to the URI Plant Diagnostic Laboratory  
<https://web.uri.edu/coopext/services/pdl/>
- Online Resources: Universities and gardening websites have extensive photo guides. Use the word “extension” for your search

## Management

Once you have identified the problem; you can implement control strategies. Often, cultural practices like proper watering, weeding, improve air ventilation, crop rotation and biopesticides can help manage pests and diseases.

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