

# Late blight

*Phytophthora infestans* (A2 mating type)



Plant Health  
AUSTRALIA

EXOTIC PEST – CALL THE EXOTIC PLANT PEST HOTLINE IF SUSPECTED

## What crops does it affect?

Solanaceous species including potato, tomato, eggplant and tobacco.

## Which part of the plant will be damaged?

Whole plant.

## What should I look for?

Symptoms of the A2 mating type are similar to those of the established A1 mating type but are more severe and may show resistance to Metalaxyl. These symptoms include small brown-black spots on the leaves often surrounded by a pale halo, while the underside of the leaves may take on a white, downy appearance in wet weather.

Blight can spread quickly, causing the complete collapse of foliage within a few days. In severe cases the tubers can become infected, giving rise to sunken patches and a brown rot. This usually leads to secondary infection by other bacteria and fungi resulting in an unpleasant smell as potatoes turn into a mushy mess. Outbreaks of late blight occur when night temperatures are cool, followed by warm days with mists and rains. Under those conditions the disease spreads rapidly and fields of potatoes can be destroyed in less than two weeks.

## How does it spread?

Spread of late blight over short to moderate distances between plants and fields occurs by wind or wind-driven rain and can travel as far as 15–20km. Spread over longer distances, across countries and continents, occurs in seed potatoes.

The A2 mating type of late blight could arrive in Australia through spores blown in the wind or transported on clothing, through soil on equipment or on illegally smuggled crops. If they arrive in Australia, new strains of late blight could rapidly spread through airborne means and then establish in volunteer crops or overwinter in plant debris or soil for years.

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Leaves of a late blight affected plant.

*Nancy Gregory, University of Delaware, Bugwood.org*



Late blight of potato.

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**IF YOU SEE ANYTHING UNUSUAL,  
CALL THE EXOTIC PLANT PEST HOTLINE**

**1800 084 881**