



# GROWING GARDENERS

NEWSLETTER FOR SOUTH EASTERN ALBERTA



## THE DIRT THIS MONTH

### **MHHA HELPS GARDENS GROW** 02

Good news for Osborne Park

### **BUG CURIOUS** 03

Intro to common garden insect visitors

### **BLOSSOM END ROT** 04

How to deal with tomato trouble

### **LOCAL PLANTING CALENDAR** 05

A garden planner for SE Alberta

### **UPCOMING EVENTS** 06

Garden events for plant-curious people

### **CFCA + GARDEN CLUB** 07

Info about our organization

CFCA's Growing Gardeners Newsletter aims to support gardeners of all experience levels in Medicine Hat and area. To sign up for our mailing list, email [CFCAGarden@gmail.com](mailto:CFCAGarden@gmail.com).





# MHHA Helps Community Garden Grow



Community Food Connections Association is thrilled to be the recipient of a \$5000 donation from the Medicine Hat & District Horticultural Association towards the further development of our Osborne Park Community Garden. These funds will be used towards the purchase of additional beds and fill to help reduce that wait list for community garden beds. Thank you Medicine Hat & District Horticultural Association for your generous donation! Learn more about this great local garden organization at [MedHatHort.ca](http://MedHatHort.ca).





# Bug Curious

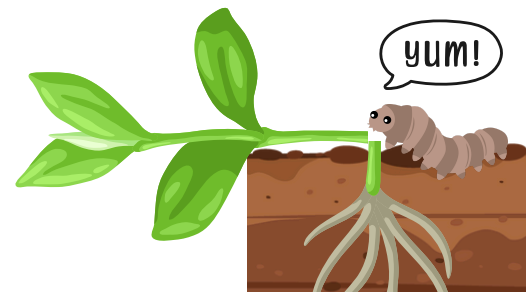
Learn about some of the insects that may be visiting the garden at different times of the year

## CUTWORMS

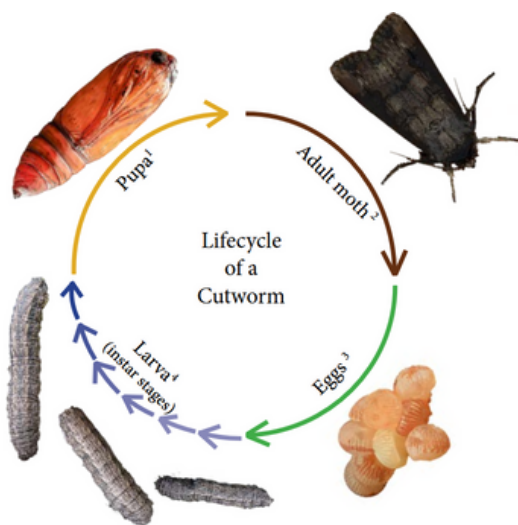
As we return to the garden in early spring, some of the insects we may encounter are cutworms. Not technically worms, cutworms are the larvae of several native and introduced moth species from the Noctuidae family. Most species overwinter as larvae, hairless, pale to dark brown caterpillars that curl up when disturbed. They usually have 3 pairs of front legs and 5 pairs at the back. We may also find cutworm pupae in the garden, which look like brown shiny capsules that are pointed at one end and may wiggle when disturbed (see image below).

Some cutworms feed during the day while others feed at night. Diets can vary; some species eat a few types of plants, while others have a broader palate. Legumes, brassicas, corn, strawberries, tomato, potato, peppers, spinach and sunflower are on the menu for various cutworm species.

The classic children's book *The Very Hungry Caterpillar* can give us some insight into the trouble that cutworms cause. They get their name from the way that they feed, chewing through and severing plant stems just above or below the surface of the soil. Larvae of most insect species tend to be voracious eaters as they need a lot of energy to grow. After pupating, the adult moths feed on nectar from flowers, causing no damage to plants.



Cutworm damage is typically easy to spot; tops of plants will either be lying down or look wilted and dead (if the stem was not fully severed). Often the perpetrator can be found lying low right next to the scene of the crime. Gently dig around in the top 1/2" of soil in the area to find the cutworm and then implement physical control methods (ie. squishing).



Cutworm lifecycle

<sup>1,3</sup> cc-by 2.0 USGS Bee Monitoring Lab,

<sup>2</sup> cc-by 2.0 Andy Reago and Chrissy McClarren

<sup>4</sup> John Gavloski (Manitoba Agriculture)

Because most of the 1,500 noctuid moths in Canada are not only harmless garden guests but also important members of a healthy ecosystem, we want to be cautious in dealing with the few that are causing trouble. Applying insecticide will harm natural cutworm predators, like parasitic wasps and ground beetles, as well as pollinators.

When the first cutworm is found, or plant is damaged, consider putting a metal ring around other high value plants of the same type made from a soda can or other thin metal. Thoroughly searching the area for cutworms, and even keeping an eye out as we are digging in the soil, moving compost, etc. is a good idea. A final word of warning: bulk manure and compost brought in from farms that is stored uncovered can introduce cutworms to the garden. Check it before spreading to save yourself from heartache!

Image: Floate, K.D. 2017. Cutworm pests on the Canadian Prairies: Identification and management field guide. Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada, Lethbridge, Alberta.

# Stop the Rot

*Tomatoes are the crown jewels of the garden. With our hot, dry summers, we avoid some fungal diseases and pests that exist in other areas. One of the issues we do encounter, however, is Blossom End Rot.*



It's mid-summer and the tomatoes are beginning to form. The green orbs swell, eventually developing the first signs of blush. It is typically early in the season that we may find the first sign of trouble: a dark, water-soaked spot forming on the bottom of the tomato, where the blossom once was. This spot will continue to grow wider and deeper into the flesh of the tomato, eventually causing it to rot. Meet Blossom End Rot (BER): not a contagious disease, nor is it caused by pests, bacteria, or fungus. So what is it?

## The Problem

It has been known for over 75 years that BER is related to a calcium deficiency in the fruit. New research suggests that **plant stress** damages the fruit **limiting calcium** availability. This is the cause of BER, not calcium deficiency in the soil. Native prairie soils, and the soil in our backyards, typically have an abundance of calcium, so adding more is unlikely to help. "But I sprinkled crushed Tums/eggshells/etc around the plant and there's no more BER!" This is because **earlier in the season, plants experience more stress** like rapid growth, volatile temperatures, etc. As tomato plants become established, and the weather settles down, there is less stress on the plant.

Plant stress can be caused by several things like high-salinity, drought, high temperatures, and excessive light. In most cases, **BER is related to watering issues**; most plants grow best in soils that are consistently moist, not drying out then flooded. Another stressor can be **overfertilizing** with Nitrogen which promotes vegetative growth at the expense of the fruit.

## The Solution

When dealing with BER, start with ensuring consistent soil moisture levels. Adding **organic matter**, like compost, will improve how water moves through most soils: in clay soils it improves drainage and in sandy soils it acts as a sponge to hold moisture. A **few inches of mulch** will not only conserve moisture, but also help regulate soil temperatures. We want to **apply water slowly** and evenly so drip irrigation and soaker hoses are great options. Ollas (buried unglazed clay that slowly release water as needed) may also be helpful in areas where hand watering is the only option. Check that soil is moist at least 6" deep.

For anyone growing **tomatoes in containers**, this is where adding fertilizer with calcium is likely necessary. Potting mix contains no minerals to speak of, but has plenty of organic matter typically in the form of peat moss. Limiting stress is still a must, especially because potting mix can dry out and heat up quickly in the heat of summer.

While fruit with BER is safe to eat (excepting the blackened spots), it is best to **remove damaged tomatoes** immediately to avoid wasting the plant's energy. A limited number of cultivars resistant to BER are available, but improving plant management and limiting stress should successfully prevent this pesky problem.

Image: Blossom end rot (calcium deficiency) on a tomato by A13ean. [https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Blossom\\_end\\_rot.JPG](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Blossom_end_rot.JPG)



# GARDEN PLANNER



# 2025 ZONE 3/4

Vegetable	Method	Indoor Start		Transplant Out		Direct Sow		Min. Soil	Days to	
		Dates		Dates		Dates		Temp	Maturity	
		Earliest	Latest	max	min	max	min	(Celsius)	min	max
Beans (bush)	DS	x	x	x	x	May 20	July 1	15	50	60
Beans (pole)	DS	x	x	x	x	May 20	July 1	15	60	70
Beans (drying)	DS	x	x	x	x	May 20	July 1	15	90	100
Beets	DS	x	x	x	x	April 22	June 24	5	50	70
Broccoli	Trans	March 11	March 25	April 29	May 6	x	x	5	60	100
Brussels Sprouts	Trans	April 8	April 22	April 29	May 6	x	x	5	100	180
Cabbage	Trans	March 11	March 25	April 22	April 22	x	x	5	70	100
Carrot	DS	x	x	x	x	April 22	June 24	10	60	80
Cauliflower	Trans	March 25	April 8	May 6	June 3	x	x	5	60	120
Celery (stalks)	Trans	February 26	March 11	May 13	June 3	x	x	5	130	140
Celery (root)	Trans	March 11	March 25	May 13	June 3	x	x	5	100	150
Corn	DS	x	x	x	x	May 27	June 24	15	70	105
Cucumber (pckl)	Trans+DS	April 22	April 29	May 27	June 3	May 27	June 17	15	55	65
Cucumber (slice)	Trans+DS	April 22	April 29	May 27	June 3	May 27	June 17	15	55	65
Eggplant	Trans	March 25	April 8	June 3	June 10	x	x	15	100	140
Kale / Collards	Trans+DS	April 8	April 22	April 22	May 13	April 22	July 29	5	55	75
Kohlrabi	Trans	April 8	April 22	April 29	May 13	x	x	5	55	70
Leeks	Trans	March 11	March 25	April 22	June 3	x	x	5	120	150
Lettuce (head)	Trans+DS	April 1	April 15	April 22	May 20	April 22	April 29	10	40	80
Lettuce (leaf)	Trans+DS	April 1	April 15	April 22	May 20	April 22	April 29	10	40	80
Melon	Trans	April 22	April 29	June 3	June 10	x	x	20	70	130
Okra	Trans	April 15	April 29	June 10	May 20	x	x	15	50	65
Onion (dry)	Trans	March 11	March 25	June 17	May 13	x	x	10	100	120
Onion (green)	Trans+DS	April 8	May 6	May 6	June 3	May 6	July 1	10	40	60
Parsnip	DS	x	x	x	x	May 6	June 3	10	110	130
Peas	DS	x	x	x	x	April 22	May 27	5	55	85
Peppers (hot)	Trans	March 11	March 25	June 3	June 17	x	x	15	80	100
Peppers (sweet)	Trans	March 11	March 25	June 3	June 17	x	x	15	60	90
Potato	DS	x	x	x	x	April 22	May 13	10	90	130
Radish	DS	x	x	x	x	April 8	June 3	5	45	70
Shallot	Trans	March 11	March 25	April 22	May 13	x	x	10	90	120
Spinach	DS	x	x	x	x	April 8	May 27	5	45	60
Squash / Pumpkin	Trans+DS	April 22	April 29	May 13	June 3	May 13	June 10	15	85	120
Swiss Chard	Trans+DS	April 8	April 22	May 20	June 3	April 22	June 24	5	50	75
Tomatillo	Trans	March 25	April 8	June 3	June 10	x	x	15	75	100
Tomato (cherry)	Trans	March 25	April 8	May 20	June 10	x	x	15	65	75
Tomato (paste)	Trans	March 25	April 8	May 20	June 10	x	x	15	70	90
Tomato (slicing)	Trans	March 25	April 8	May 20	June 10	x	x	15	80	95
Turnip	DS	x	x	x	x	April 22	June 3	5	45	70
Zucchini	Trans+DS	April 29	May 6	May 13	June 3	May 13	June 24	15	50	70

DS = Direct Sow

Trans = Transplant (start indoors or buy seedlings)

x = does not apply

# UPCOMING EVENTS



SPRING 2025

## STARTING SEEDS 101

APRIL 5, 6 & 12, 13  
10-12PM OR 2-4PM

Location:  
Windmill Garden Centre  
920 - 1st Street, SW.

Space Limited - Registration required\*  
[www.coderreflowerfarm.com](http://www.coderreflowerfarm.com) | 587-448-8866

BLONDIES GIFT AND  
GARDEN CENTER

## Spring At Blondies

Spring events at Blondies  
Address: 1855 2 Ave, Dunmore, AB T1B 0K3  
Phone: (403) 504-0040

April 6<sup>th</sup> 1:00-3:00

### Tiny Greens, Big Flavour!

Want to grow fresh, nutrient-packed greens right in your own kitchen? Join our Microgreens Class and learn how to cultivate these tiny superfoods in just days!

April 13<sup>th</sup> 1:00-3:00

### Unlock the Power of Seeds!

Want to grow your own food or flowers from scratch? Join our Seed Starting Class and learn how to plant, nurture and successfully grow from seed!



April 27<sup>th</sup> 1:00-3:00

### Build Your Own Tiny World!

Ever wanted to create a little green to escape? Join our Terrarium Class and craft a stunning, self-sustaining glass garden! No green thumb required!

May 18<sup>th</sup> 1:00-3:00

### Create Your Own Spring Planter!

Spring is in the air-let's get planting! Join our Spring Planter Class and design a vibrant, custom arrangement to welcome the season!



May 4<sup>th</sup> 1:00-3:00

### Pot Up Some Love for Mom!\*

Looking for the perfect Mother's Day gift? Or want to spend quality time creating something special together? Join our Mother's Day Potting Class and craft a beautiful, personalized planter!

#### Extra Info:

In these classes you will learn the secrets of a thriving terrarium, learn expert planing and care tips, choose from a gorgeous selection of flowers, plants, and decorations. Last but not least, you get to take home your own creations!

\*\*\*\*\*  
Make sure you bring gloves and pruners for the Mother's Day Event!

## PLANT SWAP

Do you have houseplants that no longer spark joy? Bring them (healthy plants/clippings) to the Library for our Plant Exchange in partnership with the Medicine Hat & District Horticultural Association!

**Saturday,  
April 26  
2-4 PM**

If you have clean pots or planters that you'd like to use or share, bring those along! Volunteers will be available to help with repotting and to answer any questions.



## Fourth Free 2025 Webinar

**April 24th,  
Noon to 1:00 pm MST**

Choosing Flower Species  
for Restoration of  
Beneficial Insect  
Biodiversity

Presented by:

Dr. Carol Frost,  
Assistant Professor,  
Department of Renewable Resources,  
University of Alberta





# ABOUT CFCA AND GARDEN CLUB

2025 will be our 4th year offering Growing Gardeners Education Program, CFCA's free garden club. We are excited to continue to provide ecologically-responsible advice and the opportunity for gardeners of all experience levels to learn from one another in Medicine Hat. We are tremendously grateful to be able to host garden club at the Root Cellar Food & Wellness Hub. We also plan to explore some other garden sites in the city this season to highlight different types of growing conditions. Sign-up for our mailing list to get up-to-date information about Growing Gardeners and events like the Seedy Sunday below! Email [CFCAgarden@gmail.com](mailto:CFCAgarden@gmail.com).



Growing Gardener's is a **free, hands-on garden club** hosted by CFCA from April to September. Join us as we cover different topics for growing health, delicious food in our climate. Registration is not required. Children are welcome if accompanied by an adult.



**WEDNESDAY, APRIL  
16 + 23, 7:00 PM**

**BEHIND THE ROOT CELLAR,  
440 MAPLE AVE. SE**



## ABOUT COMMUNITY FOOD CONNECTIONS ASSOCIATION (CFCA)

Community Food Connections Association is a non-profit organization based in Medicine Hat, Alberta. Launched in 2003, we have been working to support food security in the community through education, programming, partnerships and policy support for improvements in food, nutrition, health and local agriculture.

Our programs include the Good Food Club, Community Kitchens, the Local Food & Producers Directory, Medicine Hat Community Gardens, and Growing Gardeners Education Program. To find out more, head over to our website, [FoodConnections.ca](http://FoodConnections.ca), or social media accounts:



@COMMUNITYFOODCONNECTIONS



@CFCA\_MH



[www.foodconnections.ca](http://www.foodconnections.ca)

PAGE 07