



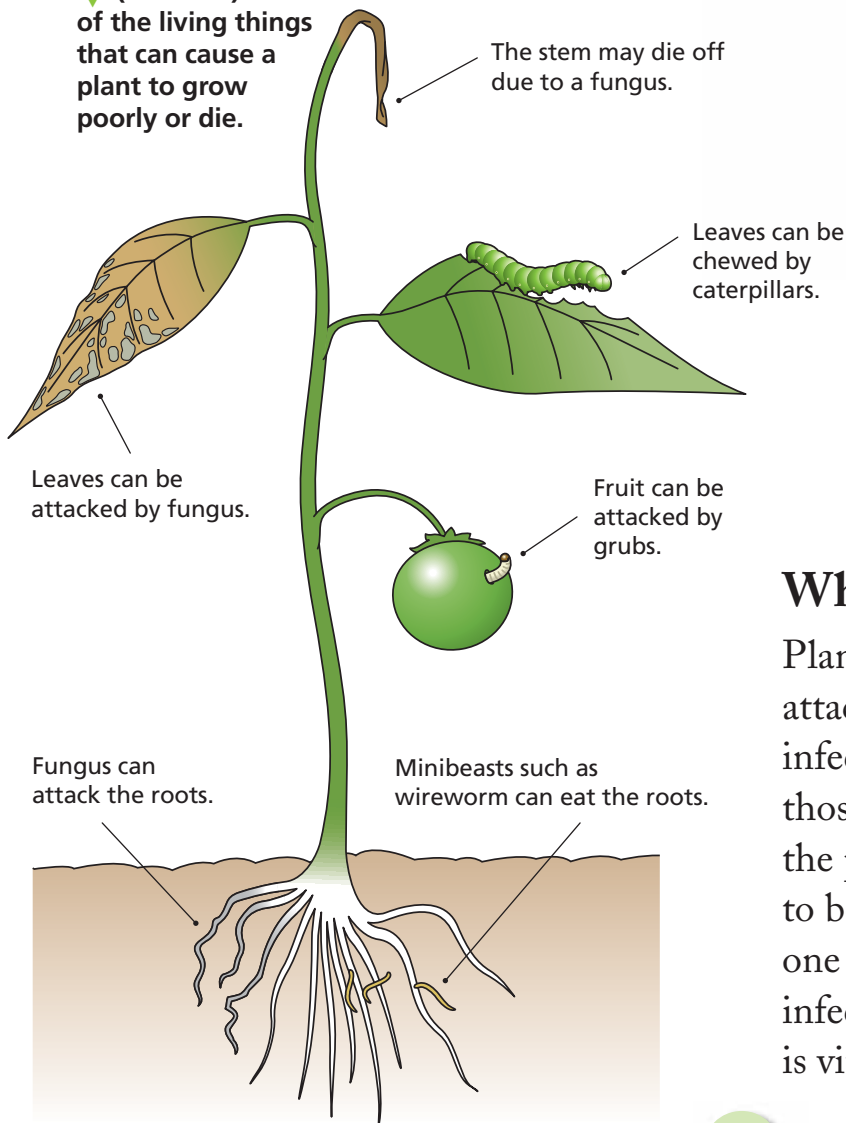
Pests and diseases

Plants are food for many animals, including tiny creatures called microbes. These can stop plants from growing well.

You will remember that plants are food for all other living things (Picture 1). When we grow plants and eat them we call it farming and gardening. When other animals eat our farm or garden plants we call them pests. Tiny creatures called **MICROBES** can get into plants and cause **DISEASE**.



▼ (Picture 1) Some of the living things that can cause a plant to grow poorly or die.



▲ (Picture 2) Common diseases of plants are called mildew and rust. They develop fastest in damp conditions, which is why a warm wet summer brings on more disease than a dry one. This leaf has rust. It is causing the dark-coloured blotches.

Which plants get disease?

Plants have natural defences to stop attack by disease. All plants can become infected by microbes (Picture 2), but those that are not growing well will have the poorest defences and are most likely to be affected. Once a plant is affected by one disease, the chances are it will soon be infected by other diseases. This is why it is vital to try to treat any disease quickly.

▼ (Picture 3) This caterpillar is rapidly munching its way through the leaves of a tree.



Cultivated plants (the ones we use for food or for our gardens) have been bred to grow quickly, but they are usually less able to fight diseases. Cultivated plants are also grown together in large numbers, so it is easy for a disease to spread quickly between plants.

Which plants are attacked by pests?

We grow plants because they are a concentrated source of food. All animals know this as well, and so plants are eaten by a wide range of wildlife (Pictures 3 and 4).

Most destructive are insects, mainly because they occur in larger numbers than any other living thing on Earth. They are also difficult to stop. A fence, for example, will keep out grazing animals like sheep, but it will not stop greenfly and other insects. In general, these have to be attacked by spraying plants with insecticides (Picture 5).



▲ (Picture 4) This crab apple has been attacked by an insect.

▼ (Picture 5) One way to deal with pests and diseases is to spray plants with chemicals.



Summary

- Microbes can cause disease.
- Insects that eat the plants we want to grow are called pests.
- Both microbes and pests can kill plants.