

The Olympia Rose Society

Pests and Diseases of Roses in Olympia

A good rose reference book with pictures will greatly assist your identification of rose problems. This information is offered as a general guideline for the south Puget Sound area. This material has been adapted from the Time Magazine Book, How to Grow Roses, pages 94 - 97. Also see our website at www.olyrose.org.

Fungicides cannot cure infected plants, but only stop the spread of fungal diseases. That is why we recommend a preventative fungicide program, beginning in late winter with dormant sprays such as copper sulfate, or at the latest, with growing-season fungicides as soon as leaves appear in spring. If you're very good, and keep up the fungicides through spring, you might be able to cut out spraying over the summer when the weather dries.

We do not recommend the use of insecticides on a regular basis. We do not have any of the insect pests that would require this approach, such as Japanese beetles or chili thrips. Our main insect pests are easily dealt with on an as-needed basis.

We also do not recommend the use of three-in-one products combining fertilizer, insecticide, and fungicide except under unusual circumstances. The fertilizer in these products does not work well in our climate and soils; the insecticides are often unnecessary and are quite toxic to bees and earthworms, *even when used as directed*; and the fungicide could be sprayed by itself on its own schedule.

When spraying, use a sprayer that produces a fine mist with an adjustable nozzle, and be sure to spray undersides of leaves thoroughly as well as uppersides. Mites, many insects, and most fungi work on the undersides of the leaves. Hose-end sprayers are not a good choice for spraying roses. Always read and follow label directions. The pesticide label is a legal document that you agreed to abide by when you opened the bottle. The instructions are there to protect you and your family; the local environment; and to give you the best results. At a minimum, wear goggles, hat, rubber boots, pesticide-resistant gloves, and long pants and sleeves while spraying. Dishwashing gloves are not adequate. Do not use the same sprayer for herbicides as you can never get every trace of herbicide out of the sprayer before re-using to spray fungicides on your prize roses.

Diseases

Blackspot is the number one complaint of rose growers in western Washington. While the local native roses and the freeway roses (rugosas) are resistant, most garden roses are susceptible to varying degrees. Description: Circular black spots 1/4 inch in diameter appear on upper leaf surfaces. Each black spot has a feathery margin and is surrounded by a yellow halo. As the spots enlarge and coalesce, the entire leaf turns yellow and falls from the plant. Purplish or brownish spots and streaks may appear on canes. Most common in late spring and early summer, in damp weather, or with overhead watering. Spores overwinter on canes and infect next spring's leaves. Use dormant sprays in late winter/early spring, such as copper sulfate or lime sulfur. Once leaves emerge in spring use growing-season fungicides such as those containing propiconazole, triforine, chlorothalonil, myclobutanil or mancozeb. Sulfur and copper are also available in growing-season formulations. Triforine, found in Ortho Funginex, is a very effective fungicide but *you must wear eye protection when using triforine*. We do not recommend neem oil, or baking soda or milk recipes, for blackspot.

The Olympia Rose Society

Powdery Mildew is not as much of a scourge as blackspot but some rose varieties are susceptible and will need treatment. Description: Leaves, especially new leaves, become twisted or curled or puckered and are covered with a white powder. Flower buds and canes can also be affected. The problem is most severe when nights are cool and humid, and days are warm and dry, as is usual in August. Remove and destroy all infected leaves, including those on the ground. To prevent mildew or to arrest its spread, spray with a fungicide starting in mid summer, or hose off bushes every morning to wash the spores off the plant. Powdery mildew spores cannot germinate in water (although blackspot loves wet leaves so be careful). Daily hosing will also keep spider mites in check.

Anthracnose in spring and **Rust** in summer are lesser problems. They can be controlled with mancozeb or myclobutanil if necessary.

Botrytis blight or brown rot turn flowers into balls of brown or gray mush in wet spring weather. Trim off affected flowers as soon as you notice it as it can spread down the stem and kill the stem if left unchecked. Pick up and discard any fallen rotting petals.

Insect and Mite Pests

There are no insecticides that are completely safe for beneficial insects. Avoid using any insecticide unless absolutely necessary, including so-called ‘safe’ or ‘organic’ insecticides like horticultural oil, insecticidal soap, or neem. *Bacillus thuringiensis*, or Bt, is sold as a ‘safe’ caterpillar control, but it kills all caterpillars, both pest moths and beautiful butterflies. *Do not* use any controls for Japanese beetles – we don’t have them.

Aphids are common and numerous in spring and early summer. Insecticides are not necessary. Blast aphids off the plant with a strong stream of water, or squish or wipe off with your hands. Any insecticides will also kill the many beneficial insects that want to eat the aphids. Aphids generally do little damage.

Root weevils can be as damaging on roses as they are on rhododendrons. Larvae eat the roots while the adults eat the leaves. Dust affected plants with a slug and insect bait.

Rose midge destroys developing flower buds. You won’t see anything – eventually you’ll notice that you should have flowers but there aren’t any. This is the only insect we recommend using imidacloprid for (the active ingredient in Bayer Rose and Flower Care). The lawn formulation is best – just insecticide, no fertilizer or fungicide.

Rose slugs are small caterpillar-like insects that chew on leaves from the underside and can turn all the leaves into lace. It is not a caterpillar, so Bt will not work on it. Hand-squish, or use a systemic insecticide.

Spit bugs are harmless. Just ignore them, or hose off the spit.

Leaf cutter bees cut semi-circular pieces out of the leaves. They are a beneficial insect so no control is recommended. They don’t hurt the roses.

Thrips damage flower petals in summer. Carefully mist just-opening flower buds with a systemic insecticide.

Spider mites are not spiders, but mites. Spiders are harmless to roses. Spider mites can defoliate your plants in hot weather but are easily controlled by hosing off the undersides of the leaves every 3 days or so in hot weather (which will also help with powdery mildew control). Insecticides are not effective on mites, and miticides are expensive and hard to find. Miniature roses are most susceptible, along with roses planted next to pavement or south-facing walls. Roses with mulch or companion plants are least susceptible.