

Rose Diseases

Roses are one of the most popular landscape plants, but many homeowners are unfamiliar with the most common rose problems. Rose slug, blackspot, rose rosette and powdery mildew can all have either unsightly or devastating effects on our landscape roses.

Bristly Rose Slug

Rose slug looks like a small, green caterpillar but is actually the larva of a sawfly. This larvae feed on the green leaf tissue of roses leaving a clear layer begin. Feeding in this matter makes the leaves transparent, a term called skeletonization or windowpaning. The larvae will eventually create holes and can grow to each all of the leaf except for the major veins.

A strong jet of water will dislodge the slugs and make it difficult for them to return to the plant. The jet of water is an excellent technique to try since it will have no negative effects on pollinators or other insects. If the jet of water is unsuccessful, other treatments include insecticidal soap, horticultural oils, spinosad (Natural Guard Spinosad, Monterey Garden Insect Spray or Captain Jack's Deadbug Brew) and permethrin (Eight Vegetable, Fruit and Flower Concentrate; Hi-Yield Lawn, Garden, Pet & Livestock Insect Spray).

Blackspot of Roses

Blackspot is one of the most common rose issues. Blackspot is a fungus that shows up as dark circles on the rose leaves. These spots have feathery edges on the upper leaf surface and sometimes cause purple spots on young rose canes. Blackspot infected leaves will yellow between spots and can progress to defoliation.

During periods of wet or extremely humid weather, look for spots on the lower leaves, which will eventually work their way up the plant.

To prevent blackspot, don't plant susceptible roses unless you are willing to use fungicide sprays. Purdue University has a list of blackspot resistant cultivars. As you water your roses, keep irrigation water off the foliage as splash from fallen, infected leaves spreads the disease. Drip irrigation is ideal for roses. Roses should be planted in full sun in areas with good air movement to limit the amount of time the foliage is wet. If you do see blackspot on your roses, remove diseased leaves that have fallen and prune out infected rose canes to minimize inoculum.

If needed, protect foliage with a regular spray program (10- to 14-day schedule) of effective fungicides. Recommended fungicides include tebuconazole (BioAdvanced Disease Control for Roses, Flowers and Shrubs, BioAdvanced All-In-One Rose & Flower Care), myclobutanil (Immunox, F-Stop Lawn & Garden Fungicide) and chlorothalonil (Broad Spectrum Lawn & Garden Fungicide, Garden Disease Control, others).

Rose Rosette

Rose rosette is a serious problem for Kansas on wild roses (*Rosa multiflora*) in pastures and hedges. It is also found in domestic rose plantings. Infection can be difficult to spot but begins with elongation of a new shoot. This shoot growth could continue to be several feet long. The next odd symptom is the development of a witches' broom, a cluster of branches and leaves. The symptom we most often see on our Response Line is excessive thorniness with deformed, purplish leaves.

Infected rose plants die within 1-2 years. Even the sturdy KnockOut roses are susceptible to rose rosette. To prevent the spread of the disease, disinfect tools between rose shrubs with rubbing alcohol or a

disinfectant. Infected plants should be removed from the landscape, including the root ball, and destroyed. Wait 2-3 weeks before replanting in the area to ensure no suckers resprout.

Preliminary research indicates that since rose rosette is commonly spread by mites, control of the mites may help to prevent rose rosette. Homeowners should alternate between horticultural oil and bifenthrin (Hi-Yield Bug Blaster Bifenthrin, Ortho Insect Killer for Lawn & Landscape) on two week intervals throughout the growing season. In other words, spray with horticultural oil, wait two weeks, spray with bifenthrin and repeat throughout the growing season. Be careful of temperature restrictions on horticultural oil so pay attention to the label. Again, the results of this study are preliminary and we have much to learn before we can make more specific recommendations.

Powdery mildew

Powdery mildew is another common disease on roses but it also affects many other ornamental plants. Plants infected with powdery mildew have a white-gray mold growing on the leaf surface. Powdery mildew is a fungal disease and often appears in the high humidity that favors disease growth and spread. Spacing plants and keeping foliage dry, as with blackspot, greatly reduces disease severity. Susceptible roses may be weakened by repeated years of powdery mildew. As with most diseases, resistant varieties are the best management strategy.

While rose rosette can be fatal to rose bushes, many diseases and pest issues can be managed with proper cultural practices. As you plan your flower garden, put each plant in its ideal location, spaced appropriately. Diversify your flowerbed and pay careful attention when you see issues or changes in your plants. As always, reach out to our office with questions!