PEST AND DISEASES FACT SHEETS MENU

Black Spot
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Blackspot Fungal Disease

Blackspot is a fungal problem caused by warm sunny days with cool dewy nights and high humidity. Black spots show on the topside of the leaves, which turn yellow and drop off. If not treated the whole plant may be defoliated. When temperatures rise in midsummer the problem is reduced and can disappear.

A simple preventative spray is milk - 1 part milk to 10 parts water or Bicarbonate of Soda (Baking Soda) - 1 tablespoon to 5 litres water with a few drops of dishwashing detergent added. Spray in the cool of the morning. ‘Pest-oil’ sprayed over the leaves can also help. Spray is short lived and can be washed off with rain.

For a complete control, spray with a fungicide with active constituent ‘Triforine’ which is absorbed into the plant system lasting for 14 days or more protection. ‘Mancozeb Plus’ or ‘Eco-rose’ are contact sprays onto the leaves, and can be used every 10 days if necessary. It is possible to use a preventative spray of milk - 1 part milk to 10 parts water, or Bicarbonate of Soda (Baking Soda) - 1 tablespoon to 5 litres water, with addition of a few drops of dishwashing liquid or pest-oil. Spray in the cool of the morning. Some success has been achieved by spraying Pest-oil over the leaves however I have no personal comment on using oils.

Blackspot is one of the only problems which can ruin the fun of growing roses. When planning a new garden ask about blackspot resistance roses from us. If a variety is highly susceptible to this problem maybe it should not be purchased.
MILDEW

Mildew is a white powdery substance found on the rose leaves or tips of shoots or buds. Most commonly found when the weather is warm but moisture is present, usually spring and autumn. Most tropical regions with constantly high humidity will find mildew a problem in roses. Highly fragrant rose varieties are more susceptible.

One of the best natural sprays is milk - 1 part milk to 10 parts water sprayed on the leaves which can transforms the white power to a grey/black appearance which shows it has killed the Mildew spores. Can be used once a week. If very humid and need more control use ‘Triforine’ a systemic fungicide which is absorbed into the plant, or ‘Mancozeb Plus’ or ‘Eco-rose’ which are contact spray onto the leaves.

In severe cases plants can be defoliated by mildew and control must be taken. In tropical areas a selection of mildew resistant varieties should be considered. Highly fragrant varieties do suffer more than non-fragrant types.
RUST

Rusty-red spots are found mainly on the underside of the leaves. The leaves show small yellow spots, on touching the rust will leave an orange powder on your fingers. Only in severe cases will plants affected with rust lose vigour, but it should be treated when it appears, mostly in late autumn.

Worth trying a milk spray - 1 part milk to 10 parts water sprayed up under the leaves to contact the rust area.

The best fungicides to use are ‘Triforine’, or ‘Mancozeb Plus’, or ‘Eco-rose’. These sprays will kill the spores. Best if sprayed under the leaves for direct contact with the pustules.

Rust is a problem mainly associated with a small number of rose varieties and only in certain weather conditions.
APHIDS

Thick colonies of insects found on the new shoots and buds in early spring and sometimes autumn. They suck into the shoots, can distort the flowers and leaves, also leaving a sticky residue on the leaves. This attracts ants which ‘milk’ the aphids for the ‘honey dew’ residue. Ants move the insects to other parts of the bush spreading them wider.

Squirt the insects off with water jet from the garden hose, or spray soapy water over the insects. Rub off small colonies with fingers. Natural predators will help reduce these pests - Parasitic Wasp, Ladybirds and their nymphs, hoverflies, and birds all control these insects very well. Other options are ‘Pest-Oil’ (not white oil) or ‘Eco-Pest Oil’ (a vegetable oil) which all coat the insect with oil and suffocate them, soapy water does also. If in plague proportions use ‘Confidor’ which is of low toxicity.

Nature does a lot to help reduce aphids – wind blows them off, rain washes them off, but the little predators are our best friends in the rose garden.

Cocoon of dead aphid with predatory wasp larvae inside.
CATERPILLAR

Leaves look ‘lacy’ and chewed around edges. Chewed holes through the flowers and tops of the buds.

Look over the plant for leaves folded over where they hide, squash the leaf. By disturbing the leaves they can drop on a thread, like a thin stick. It is green or brown, very thin, and very mobile.

Spray with ‘Success’ or ‘Dipel’ which are a form of bacteria which when ingested by the caterpillar kills it. This is a safe product. Not many are seen on a plant but the damage is first noticed. Only spray when seen, no preventives known.
TWO SPOTTED MITE (or Spider Mite)

Leaves look speckled, pale colour, underside of leaf looks dusty with masses of tiny mites. Fine webs found amongst leaves and stems. Breed in plague proportions in very hot dry dusty situations of midsummer.

Reduce the dryness of the area with water. Squirt water up into the foliage and wet the mulch and soil each morning for 3 or 4 days. This will stop their breeding as too damp. Keep moist.

No point in spraying with miticides as mites quickly become immune to each spray. No other insect sprays work either. ‘Eco-Pest Oil’ or ‘Pest-Oil’ will help if can be sprayed under leaves for contact with mites. Water is easiest and works best. Cause is very hot dry situations in the heat of summer – paving, gravel, stones, pots on verandah or patio, reflective heat off fence or walls are ideal situations when mites populate rapidly. Mulch the soil and keep wet in hot weather, no risk of fungal problems as still very hot and drying atmosphere. If blackspot did show up it is easier to control than mites.
SCALE

Clusters of scale covered insects, found in bark of the bush or on old branches, usually at the base of the older roses. Branches slowly deteriorate. Spray heavily with soapy water, or ‘Pest-Oil’, or ‘Eco-Pest Oil’ to smother the insects. May need to do several times. Ants move the scale around the plant, so eliminate the ants that ‘milk’ the scale.

Usually found on very old bushes, can kill the rose if smothered in scale. Can use ‘Confidor’ but soap or oils usually work. Not one of the most damaging rose insects but control should be undertaken to avoid more severe problems in the future.
THRIP

No image yet.


No easy remedy. Believed to blow in from harvested paddocks and dry roadside grasses. Mostly effects the early spring flowers, but new growth will follow with clean petals. No cure, if spray one day fresh insects the next.

Very disappointing to see the damaged flowers, particularly if roses only flower in the spring. This is one of the rose problems which although unsightly is best to just accept for it is no major problem and very short lived.
GARDEN WEEVIL

No image yet

If plants appear to have leaves with chewed edges mainly on lower leaves with no apparent insects to be seen, it may be Garden Weevil at work.

Loves older leaves but can be found on higher leaves of smaller plants or newly planted roses.

Best way to control is by flooding the ground by either forming a moat around the plant or continued deep soaking of the area with drippers or a hose. This also helps the plant to form new leaves and establish quicker so the problem also seems less obvious.

Can spray with ‘Confidor’.
If flower buds and young shoots are being chewed but no insects visible it may be Earwigs. These insects come out at night and can be found in leaf matter under the plant, under bark or under rocks if available. In some cases the insect can be found in the rose flower.

Best control is to trap them - crumple newspaper into an empty flowerpot, dribble vegetable oil or linseed oil onto paper, lay pot on its side amongst the plants. They will hide in the paper during the day. Dispose of next day, do over and over again, will reduce their population. More likely if garden is very dry, so mulch well to retain moisture. Most common in spring and autumn.

Can spray with ‘Confidor’.
If your roses are constantly being eaten over night you may have an herbivorous animal attacking the plants. This is most common in outer suburbs or heavily tree areas.

Most common animals would be Kangaroos and Possums and also Rabbits have been known to eat roses. Low growing bushes are more likely to be eaten by Rabbits and Kangaroos, taller bushes by Kangaroos and climbers or shrubs can be eaten by Possums. There have been cases of roses being eaten by Sheep, Goats and Horses.

Control is one of the hardest in a rose garden. Fencing can control ground feeding animals however those attacking from above simply climb over a fence or gain entry via overhanging branches.

On the market are ultra-sonic animal scarers and barriers. Some success has been achieved by Quasier chips and Chilli sprays but many say this is short lived.
BIRD DAMAGE

On several occasions I have been confronted by a sample as above. This damage was caused by a Galah. The birds open the stems of the rose bush to obtain moisture from the sappy new growth of the rose bush.

In most cases this damage occurs in late spring through summer and appears worse when in drought years. Properties where Galahs and Parrots are in large numbers will see this problem more regularly than most city dwellers.

Little can be done except the use of chilli or bitter sprays and these are effective only occasionally. Best control I have seen is to string through the garden numerous lines of fishing line. The birds try to land on the roses and their wings touch the lines which they cannot see and cause them to retreat.

Only other option I am aware of is bird scarers which may annoy the neighbours more than the birds.