



BLACK SPOT

Host Plants, Symptoms and Damage

Black spot is a fungal disease of roses, and it is common in areas that have hot humid summers. Circular black spots with fringed edges occur on both the leaves and stems. These spots start out very small, about the size of a pinhead. In mild infections they may remain this size, causing very little damage. Often, however, they increase in size and form larger spots that can cover up to half the leaf surface. In severe cases, leaves may yellow and drop, sometimes leaving the plant totally defoliated by mid summer.

This disease over-winters in fallen leaves or in infected rose canes. It is spread by splashing water, wind, insects, or even by humans during cultivation.

First symptoms usually appear during warm, humid spring weather. Initially, the dark spots will show up on lower leaves where water splashes or on the youngest leaves and flowers near the top of the plant.

Controls

Plant roses in full sun and leave at least three to four feet between them. This will increase air circulation and decrease the amount of time the foliage stays wet, lessening the chance of infection.

Keep foliage as dry as possible by watering early in the morning and avoiding overhead watering if possible.

Clean up and dispose of diseased leaves and canes to prevent the disease from over-wintering. After this clean-up, apply mulch to the area.

If plants have shown severe problems the previous year, cut them back to about four to six inches above the graft union before new growth starts in the spring and destroy the old canes.

Begin scouting for problems with the onset of warm, humid weather, and if damage is spotted, prune it out or treat it immediately before the disease gets a chance to spread. Treat plants with a preventative fungicide or try this homemade recipe:

1 T. baking soda

1 t. vegetable oil (or ¼ t. horticultural oil)

1 gal. water

Spray once a week for three weeks.

Plant disease-resistant varieties. Those with waxy leaves that repel water tend to be more resistant, as are the rugosa types.