

6/13/2007

Central Arkansas Rose Society

THE BAD, THE UGLY ROSE FUNGI--
Blackspot, Powdery Mildew and Downy Mildew

The three major fungi plaguing Arkansas' roses are blackspot, powdery mildew and downy mildew. Rose leaves with blackspot have circular black spots with feathery edges and the leaves eventually turn a bit yellow and drop off the bush. The lower leaves on the bush are generally the first to develop blackspot.

The ONLY way to control blackspot, the scourge of ALL Arkansas' rose gardens, is to PREVENT it by spraying a good fungicide (Banner Maxx or Immunox; Funginex; and Manzate) early in Spring; spraying consistently every seven to ten days dependent upon the instructions provided on the container of the fungicide (generally 7 to 14 days) and continuing the spray routine throughout the growing season.

Leaves with powdery mildew become infected when afternoons are 70 to 80 degrees, nights are very cool and dry, and air circulation is poor. Initially the leaves on the top of the bush look as if someone sprinkled them with powdered sugar or that lint has gathered on the tops of the leaves. The leaves will eventually curl and deform and the worst cases will encompass rose buds.

A good spray program with fungicides effective for blackspot will usually kick this ugly fungus before it gets started but occasionally gardeners with shade have a significant problem with powdery mildew and must resort to some of the "new age" chemicals developed specifically for powdery mildew (Rubigan; Systane, E-Rase). These products are used only when the temperatures and conditions for powdery mildew occur.

The deadliest rose fungus is downy mildew. This disease is difficult to diagnose and easy to confuse with blackspot. New leaves or leaves on the top of the bush have blotchy black smudges and if you would use a microscope on the underside of the leaves you will find a "downy" form of gray mildew. The bush will eventually defoliate and if not treated, may die. This disease usually occurs in Arkansas when bushes are shipped in from out-of-state with the disease and spreads when the days hover below 80 degrees, the nights plunge into the 50's and 60's, and the weather is damp for days and days.

Some contact sprays for blackspot such as Daconil, Manzate and Maneb contain copper and manganese and will help prevent the disease. If downy mildew is diagnosed there are a few products that work well in halting the spread of the disease (Aliette, Kocide (also a preventative), and Subdue Maxx). I'd suggest contacting one of CARS' consulting rosarians before you purchase these products. They need only be sprayed when the disease is present or the conditions for the spread of the disease exist. When temperatures reach above 90 degrees downy mildew fungi perish.

We have some excellent, reasonably safe products available to us that will prevent these fungi or prevent the spread of the fungi once the bush becomes diseased. There's just one problem: *YOU MUST SPRAY THE PRODUCT ON THE BUSHES CONSISTENTLY BEFORE THE BUSH IS PROTECTED!* Buying the chemicals and the sprayers and

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letting them sit in the garage won't keep the rose leaves healthy. SO, start early and stamp out BS, PM and DM in 2005!!! Your roses will return the favor by keeping green leaves and giving you gorgeous roses all season long.

Remember that it is wise to wear protective gloves, long sleeves and long pants, and even a mask when spraying these chemicals. All can be purchased from the same vendors.