

ROSE PESTS AND HOW TO PREVENT THEM - PART I

Roses have a target on them when it comes to pests. What looks so nice in the garden center can sometimes not look so stunning when it has spent some time in your landscape. However, just like many landscape plants, roses can succeed in your garden when you use proper selection, planting site analysis, and good cultural practices. This is Part I of several articles on battling common rose pests.

The first step in having success with roses is to pick varieties that are noted for disease resistance. There are many varieties including "old garden roses" and shrub roses that are better able to cope with a wide variety of pests than most. Also, hybrid roses grafted on 'Fortuniana' rootstock do better than plants grown on any other rootstock. Proper selection also includes purchasing healthy plants



Blackspot, *Marssonina rosae* or *Diplocarpon rosae*, is the most serious disease affecting roses in Florida

right from the start. Select plants that are free of leaf spots, distorted leaves, discolored stems, and swollen roots or stems. Plant your rose so that it will get at least six hours of full sun in soil that has been improved with organic matter. When watering, don't wet the leaves if possible. Consider using drip or micro-irrigation to ensure that the foliage stays dry. Also provide enough space between rose plants to provide good air circulation. As part of good plant sanitation, remove all old fallen leaves as they may harbor disease organisms. Sanitation will also include pruning out any stem cankers. Mulch can actually act as a barrier between the soil and potential diseases and the rose.

Black spot is perhaps the number one disease issue with rose growers. This fungal disease, promoted

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by warm and rainy weather, causes up to one-quarter inch black spots surrounded by a yellow halo on the leaves. Leaves eventually turn yellow and drop weakening the plant. While there may be some control with fungicides, chemical control is difficult. Cleaning up diseased leaves and mulching to provide a barrier can help. Some rose cultivars are resistant to black spot and provide the best preventative strategy.

Nematodes are another big rose problem. These microscopic worms damage roses by feeding on their roots. Galls and knots may form as a result of this feeding damage. Nematode

infested roses have fewer flowers and will tend to die earlier than normal. While there is really no cure for nematodes, prevention is as easy as selecting a rose grafted on 'Fortuniana' rootstock.

Next week's article will highlight some more pests of roses including thrips, galls, scales and mites.

Resources:

-Knox, G.W. & Mizell III, R.F. (2008) *Pests of Roses in Florida*. UF/IFAS Extension Service.

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