

Rose diseases

GWF475

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Roses suffer from a range of diseases that can be difficult to control in a bad year. Planting more resistant varieties is often the best approach.

Q Which diseases do roses suffer from?

A The main ones are black spot, rose mildew and rose rust, but they also suffer from canker and viruses.

Q Will these diseases spread to other plants?

A No, they only affect roses, but all types of rose can succumb.

Q These diseases seem to be getting worse; what causes them?

A With the exception of virus problems, all these diseases are the result of fungal infections. In towns, sulphur produced by burning coal used to help control black spot. Since the Clean Air Act it has become more common. Rose rust used to be quite rare, but has gradually spread from the south of England, probably helped by climatic changes. Rose mildew tends to be worse when the plants are short of water, so dry summers will encourage it.

With individual rose varieties, resistance to disease often breaks down over time. An old plant may be healthy, but new bushes of the same variety could be affected.

Q Can you tell me more about black spot?

A Rose black spot (*Diplocarpon rosae*) is extremely common and widespread. The symptoms are dark spots with yellow edges, or

more irregular dark blotches, visible on both sides of the leaf. Later, the leaves may turn yellow and fall early. In a bad year this can happen very quickly, and lead to complete defoliation. Repeated or severe attacks can seriously weaken plants, though the disease is rarely fatal.

Q How does black spot spread?

A The fungus which creates the spots produces spores that can be spread by rain splash and air currents, or by gardeners. It develops most quickly in warm, wet conditions. The spores overwinter mostly on the shoots but some overwinter on fallen leaves, and can survive in soil.

Q How do I control black spot?

A Pruning in spring will remove many of the overwintering spores and reduce infection. Raking up leaves may help, but as spores are so prevalent it may not be worth the effort. If the disease appears in spring, picking off affected leaves can reduce the spread. Don't bother, however, if the disease does not occur until late summer. You can treat using Multirose Ready to use.

Q Can you tell me more about mildew?

A Rose powdery mildew (*Sphaerotheca pannosa*) is also very common and widespread. The symptoms appear mainly on the

younger shoots. The leaves become distorted and puckered, and buds fail to open. A greyish, powdery deposit appears on the leaves, stems or buds, and can turn the whole shoot a dirty white.

Q How does powdery mildew spread?

A The fungus produces spores which are spread by the wind. It overwinters on stems or in buds, not on the leaves.

Q How do I control powdery mildew?

A Powdery mildew tends to be worse when plants are short of water, and where air circulation is poor - so plants growing against walls are particularly vulnerable. Water well in dry spells but avoid wetting the leaves. Mulch in spring or autumn when the soil is moist. It is better to grow susceptible climbers on pergolas or arches, rather than walls or fences, to give better air circulation. Mildew can weaken roses, and ruin their appearance, but is unlikely to kill them.

Q Can you tell me more about rust?

A Rose rust (*Phragmidium tuberculatum* and *Phragmidium mucronatum*) is becoming more widespread, but is still commoner in the south and west of the country. It is less of a problem than black spot or mildew.

Rust may appear as small, bright-orange powdery bumps on the underside of the leaf. However, this early stage of the disease is often overlooked, and it is not noticed until later. Yellow-orange pustules appear in late summer on the undersides of the leaves, often matched by yellow spots on the upper surface. The pustules then turn black, and the whole leaf may die and fall early.

Q How does rose rust spread?

A The spores overwinter mainly on fallen leaves and are spread to the new leaves in spring by rain splash or on the wind. Some spores may also survive on other debris, on shoots and in the soil.

Q How do I control rose rust?

A Look out for the bright-orange spots early in the season, and remove affected leaves. Collecting up fallen leaves in autumn is also worthwhile.

Q What fungicide treatments are there?

A For mildew our Best Buy is Multirose Ready to use or you could try the organic option, Natural Fungus and Bug Killer. Multirose Ready to use also works on rust.

Q Are there any disease-resistant rose varieties?

A No rose variety is immune to any of these diseases and, in a bad year, all may succumb. However, many roses show some degree of resistance, though this can vary from area to area as strains of fungus differ around the country. Nowadays, all new roses are trialled for disease resistance, and the most susceptible should not be marketed. Consequently, rose varieties less than five years old are likely to be relatively disease-

resistant. However, given that disease resistance can break down quickly in some roses, varieties known to be resistant may be a better bet. The roses listed right, are all tried, tested and widely available.

Q Tell me more about canker.

A Rose cankers are not particularly common, but the most widespread and most serious is stem canker (*Leptosphaeria coniothyrium*). This produces sunken, shrivelled areas of bark which turn brown. If they encircle the stem the whole shoot will die. Canker cannot be treated, so cut out affected shoots and, if the whole plant is badly cankered, then dispose of it by burning or binning.

Q Tell me more about rose viruses.

A Rose viruses are unusual in the garden and, even if they do occur, they are rarely serious. Strawberry latent ringspot virus causes yellow flecks or mottling and is transmitted by eelworms in the soil. Rose mosaic virus causes a range of effects, including yellow netting, bands or wavy lines. Its mode of transmission is unknown. There is no treatment, but roses with viruses usually grow and flower anyway. However, if plants become stunted, or fail to flower, they should be removed.

Widely available resistant varieties

Short varieties (up to 70cm)

'Amber Queen' (amber yellow)
'Dawn Chorus' (orange)
'English Miss' (rosy blush)
'Korresia' (bright yellow)
'Queen Mother' (pink)
'Sexy Rexy' (rose pink)
'Sweet Dream' (apricot)
'Trumpeter' (bright vermilion)

Medium varieties

'Deep Secret' (deep crimson)
'Fellowship' (deep orange)
'Just Joey' (coppery orange)
'Many Happy Returns' (blush pink)
'Tequila Sunrise' (yellow/scarlet)
'Remember Me' (coppery orange/yellow)
'Royal William' (deep crimson)
'Silver Jubilee' (coppery pink/peach)

Tall varieties (over 100cm)

'Alexander' (vermilion red)
'Graham Thomas' (deep yellow)
'Felicia' (pink/pale edge)
'Gertrude Jekyll' (pink)
'Heritage' (pale pink)
'Iceberg' (white)
'Mary Rose' (rose pink)
'Scabrosa' (purply pink)

Climbers

'Compassion' (pink/apricot)
'Dublin Bay' (deep red)
'Dortmund' (red, white eye)
'Golden Showers' (golden yellow)
'Mme Alfred Carriere' (white)
'New Dawn' (shell pink)
'Penny Lane' (champagne buff)
'Warm Welcome' (orange red)