

Spraying Your Roses.....On Your Way to Winning

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Face the facts...no matter what you believe, have heard or read, roses need to be sprayed. The key to award winning roses is consistency and timeliness. Roses are prone to attack from pests and disease. **Consistently** spraying your roses in a **timely** fashion will go a long way toward controlling insect and fungal concerns of all rosarians. The other myth that needs to be addressed, if you are interested in exhibiting, is that **ORGANICS** typically do not work for either pests or fungal diseases. Begin your spray program immediately after spring pruning and continue spraying until your roses go dormant.

For most rose growers spring is not a concern regarding disease but bear in mind that what you do in the spring will pay dividends come the fall rose shows provided you have been consistent and timely in your spray program. Pests are by far the greatest concern for rose growers early on and it is Aphids and Spider Mites that can wreak havoc with your roses. Aphids go right after new growth and typically appear in mid to late April. You most often will see them covering emerging buds. A water spray will knock them off of the buds but either Orthene or Merit will eradicate the problem for the season. Keep in mind they may return with the warm days and cool nights of fall.

Our other pest gets top billing as the Spider Mite will defoliate a bush if left unattended. It is very difficult to actually see a Spider Mite but if it is hot and you have graying or yellowing of the leaves moving from low on the plant upward chances are you have Spider Mites. If you look at the underside of a leaf you can usually feel the mites; they will appear as tiny dark dots. Smaller roses such as Miniatures and Minifloras are more commonly attacked although all roses are susceptible to the problem. The problem with Mites is that they reproduce in three days; not something you want to overlook unless you are not concerned about foliage.

Spraying the undersides of leaves with water will knock most of the mites off of your rose bush. This is where consistency comes into play; recall the three day reproduction cycle. Guess what happens if you do not consistently spray the undersides of the leaves? The relatives that you missed with that one time spraying are hard at work. Miss a week or ten days and you will see almost all of your leaves turning gray to yellow. So unless you want to only show in the "Rose in a Bowl" or "Picture Frame" class....pay attention and stay on top of this problem!

In order to bring the Spider Mites under control it is best to spray every two to three days for at least five sprayings. Doing this as suggested should alleviate your Spider Mite problems. We have found that **Avid** works best but **Merit** or most other systemic insect sprays will work equally as well if consistently sprayed every two or three days until the breeding cycle is interrupted sufficient to cause the mites not to be a concern. Rosemania.com is a very good source to purchase insecticides. We typically add a systemic insecticide to our spray program about every other application. If we see either Aphids or Spider Mites it is most often isolated to a few bushes and very easy to bring under control.

Most of the diseases associated with rose bushes are caused by **FUNGI**. Fungal diseases that you may or may not experience in the spring will most certainly make their presence known come summer and fall. This is why you need to be diligent in your spray program beginning in early spring. Most fungicides call for a spray application at seven to fourteen day intervals. We spray weekly and typically do not notice disease unless it is an isolated incidence at which case we spot spray in addition to our regular spray program.

The two most prevalent fungal diseases that we experience in NE Ohio are **Black Spot** and **Powdery Mildew**. Black Spot develops at around 75 degrees in temperature and must be covered with water for the disease to occur. This is why when we have a moderate wet spring that Black Spot is more difficult to control. Dry air is beneficial to keeping the disease at bay. This is another reason why some rosarians advocate not watering from over head. Nothing could be further from the truth as over head watering is not the problem but wet leaves that fail to dry are.

Powdery Mildew is probably the number one annoyance disease of exhibitors in the Buckeye district. The disease runs rampant when you have high humidity and cool temperatures associated with Ohio fall nights. It is a rule of thumb that when you have a twenty degree swing in temperature such as we typically experience in our district that Powdery Mildew is not far behind. We use Crystalline as our disease indicator as it is near universal in being the first rose to acquire the disease.

Prevention is the key to keeping rose diseases at bay. We recommend using at minimum two different fungicides keeping in mind that one must be an external covering and the other needs to be a systemic type in order to effectively control fungal diseases. We use Banner Maxx, Compass and add Mancozeb to our spray mixture about every other application. Both products are available from Rosemania and are reasonable if you have a hundred or more roses. For the smaller gardener and new exhibitors, it might make sense to team up with other rosarians and purchase the product as a joint venture.

Our final comment is that **consistency** is the key to growing pest and disease free roses. Your roses do not care if it rained and you missed your regularly scheduled spray day. They also do not care if you are tired or any of the many other excuses we can all come up with. The fact remains, if you want to grow good roses that have a chance at winning, you need to spray your roses faithfully every **seven to fourteen days**. You should begin to spray right after you cut back in the spring and continue to do so religiously until your roses show signs of dormancy in the late fall. Remember, goggles, a respirator, gloves and long sleeves are all very important safety precautions that need to be observed when spraying. Spray regularly and your chances of winning at the rose show will be improved many fold; fail to do so and disease and pests will follow.

As always, if you have questions regarding this or other articles, send them to Kristine at Beancounter30@wideopenwest.com or Richard at RJA4CPA@aol.com. We welcome your comments and hope that you are enjoying our articles as much as we are enjoying writing them.