

Roses *a common sense guide*



Diseases are just
a plant's way
of telling you
something is
not right.



— Rodale Press

Roses grow well in the mild climate and plentiful rainfall of the northwest. But fungal diseases and pests also enjoy our local conditions. This makes roses one of the most heavily sprayed ornamental flowers. Can you grow beautiful roses without toxic pesticides? You bet!



Common Rose Problems in the Puget Sound Area

Powdery mildew is the most common rose disease in our area. It looks like a white powder covering new leaves and causing them to curl. The spores survive the winter in canes and leaf buds. Mildew does not survive on dead plant material. It is spread by wind and likes humidity, but too much water destroys spores. It appears in mid-to-late summer when nights are cool, days are warm, and mornings are foggy.

Black spot is a fungus that creates black splotches surrounded by yellow on leaf surfaces. It requires water to reproduce and grow – spores spread by splashing water. Spores survive the winter. For black spot to thrive, leaves must be continuously wet for seven hours.

Rust looks like orange dots of fungus. It starts on the undersides of leaves in mid-to-late summer. The powdery orange spores are carried in the wind. Moisture must be on a leaf for several hours for rust to take hold.

Aphids are small, soft-bodied insects that cluster on buds and new leaves. Eggs live through the winter in protected nooks. Most infestations cause little physical damage and do not spread disease. Aphids have many natural predators, like ladybugs and lacewings, who may be harmed more by chemical insect controls than aphids are.

Steps to Healthy Roses

Rather than trying to rid roses of pests, focus on keeping your plants healthy to increase disease resistance.

1 Choose Disease-Resistant Plants

If you are struggling with a rose that suffers from black spot, mildew, or rust, consider replacing it with a resistant type. Before you buy, refer to the list on the back of this fact sheet, or ask your nursery for plants that thrive in western Washington.

2 Give them Sun and Air

Place roses so they receive adequate sunlight, at least six hours per day, preferably in the morning. Sunlight dries leaves, discouraging disease. Space plants so air circulates around them as they grow to maturity. In early spring (about mid-March), remove stems that aim toward the center of the bush to improve air circulation. Prune off dead and diseased canes.

3 Improve Soil for Plant Health

Soil should be well drained and rich in organic matter. Add well-rotted compost or 1 cup of alfalfa pellets per plant to the soil. Fertilize in early spring with a natural, slow-release fertilizer and compost, aged manure, or fishmeal. Excess nitrates in quick-release fertilizers cause spurts of lush but weak growth that attracts aphids and diseases.

4 Manipulate Moisture

Water deeply once a week to encourage deep roots. More frequent watering may be necessary during hot, dry spells. Damp plants are more susceptible to black spot.

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A Partial List of Disease-Resistant Varieties

Hybrid Teas:

Full Sail (white), *Firefighter* or *Lasting Love* (dark red), *Voodoo* or *Folklore* (orange-red), *New Zealand* (pink)

Floribundas:

French Lace (white), *Bill Warriner* (orange-pink), *Sheila's Perfume* (yellow-red), *Sunsprite* (yellow), *Playboy* (orange), *Lavaglut* (dark red)

Climbers:

Autumn Sunset (yellow-orange), *Lemon Meringue* (yellow), *Climbing 4th of July* (red/white), *Dublin Bay* (medium red), *Polyantha* (pale pink)

Shrubs:

Lady Elsie-May (orange-pink), *Sally Holmes* (white w/ yellow-center), *Hansa* (hybrid rugosa, deep purple-red), *Magic Meidiland* (medium pink)

David Austins:

Pat Austin (orange), *James Galway* (white), *Mary Rose* (medium pink)

For more roses that do well in our climate, visit:

www.greatplantpicks.org

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Place drip irrigation or a soaker hose around the roots to avoid wet leaves. If you use a sprinkler, give leaves time to dry before nightfall. Use an organic mulch, such as ground bark or wood chips, around plants to conserve moisture.

Keep it Clean

Pick up and discard diseased plant parts – do not compost them. After pruning diseased plants, wash tools in soap and water and swab with rubbing alcohol. In summer, clip off old flowers by cutting the stem at a slight angle, just above a cluster of five leaflets. You can apply a dormant oil and lime sulfur spray to pruned ends to prevent insect damage. As summer ends, stop cutting flowers and let them form into hips (fruits), which signal the plant to slow down and prepare for winter.

Least-Toxic Chemical Controls

Even by carefully following the practices above, you still will not have perfect, disease-free rose plants every year in the northwest. This is okay! Roses can have as much as 30 percent of the leaves, fruit, or flowers damaged without causing long-term harm. In 2008, the Woodland Park Rose Garden went pesticide-free, maintaining a wedding-quality public garden. If you do decide to treat for a pest or disease, less-toxic products are available. Visit growsmartgrowsafe.org for a list of reviewed products. Be sure you know exactly what you're treating for and follow label instructions carefully. Before treatment, test all remedies on a small portion of the plant to check for damage.

Disease: To control powdery mildew and reduce black spot, try this widely used, university-tested remedy:

1 Tbs. baking soda
2 1/2 Tbs. horticultural oil (*available at most garden stores*)
1 gal. water

Mix and store in a labeled, closed jar. Spray as a preventative or when symptoms appear. Apply in cool weather, early morning or evening. Do not spray in the heat of the day.

Insects: Most insects are either beneficial or harmless. Make sure the insect is causing harm before killing it. A good spray of water from the hose will knock aphids off the plant. They can also simply be squished between your fingers.

For more tips on rose care and resistant varieties, contact WSU Extension Master Gardeners at 360-867-2163. Or visit the American Rose Society at www.rose.org. Ask for the least-toxic solutions.

Further Reading

Controlling Diseases and Aphids on Your Roses, Hoffer M., Pscheidt, J., & DeAngelis J. Oregon State University Extension Service, publication EC 1520, published August 2000, reviewed January 2016. <https://catalog.extension.oregonstate.edu/ec1520>

Growing Roses in Washington State: Planting Roses, Ophardt, M. & Gray, S. Washington State University Extension Service, publication FS166E, 2015. <https://pubs.extension.wsu.edu/growing-roses-in-washington-state-planting-roses>

Pacific Northwest Plant Disease Management Handbook, Pscheidt, J.W., & O'camb, C.M. Oregon State University, 2018. <http://pnwhandbooks.org/plantdisease>

Miracle, Myth, or Marketing Baking Soda will fungi fail and roses rejoice? Chalker-Scott, L. Washington State University, 2009. <https://s3.wp.wsu.edu/uploads/sites/403/2015/03/baking-soda.pdf>

Properly dispose of unwanted pesticides at **HazoHouse** at the Thurston County Waste & Recovery Center, 2420 Hogum Bay Road, Lacey. Open daily, 8 a.m. to 4:45 p.m. Call 360-867-2912 for more information.

For more information on roses or to receive free or alternative format copies of Common Sense Gardening guides, call 360-867-2674 (TDD/TTY 1-800-833-6384) or visit: www.thurstoncommunitygardens.org

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