Blackspot of Rose

A very common disease of roses is blackspot; a fungus disease that can cause defoliation of susceptible plants. Though present every year, this growing season may be worse than most. Rainy weather early this spring may lead to an increase in the blackspot fungus on roses. Look for dark, circular lesions with feathery edges on the top surface of the leaves and raised purple spots on young canes. Infected leaves will often yellow between spots and eventually drop. The bottom portion of the plant is affected first with the disease moving upward as the season progresses. Heavy infestations can seriously defoliate a plant.

Blackspot is most severe under conditions of high relative humidity (> 85%), warm temperatures (75 to 85 degrees F) and six or more hours of leaf wetness. Newly expanding leaves are most vulnerable to infection. The fungus can survive on fallen leaves or canes and is disseminated primarily by splashing water.

Cultural practices are the first line of defense.

1. Don’t plant susceptible roses unless you are willing to use fungicide sprays.
2. Keep irrigation water off the foliage. Drip irrigation or soaker hoses work well with roses.
3. Plant roses in sun in areas with good air movement to limit the amount of time the foliage is wet.
4. Remove diseased leaves that have fallen and prune out infected rose canes to minimize inoculum.

If needed, protect foliage with a regular spray program (10 to 14 day schedule) of effective fungicides. Recommended fungicides include tebuconazole (Bayer Disease Control for Roses, Flowers and Shrubs), myclobutanil (Immunox), triforine (Funginex), thiophanate methyl (Fertilome Halt) and chlorothalonil (Broad Spectrum Fungicide, Garden Disease Control).

The most effective control strategy will include a combination of cultural practices, sanitation measures, and fungicide treatments.

*Lynn Loughary is the Horticulture Agent for Wyandotte County, K-State Research and Extension.*

*She can be reached by calling 913-299-9300, ext 104 or by email lloughar@ksu.edu*