

Coping with What Bugs Me!
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3/23/11

When the children were little and I worked a paying job my garden was imperfect. Now retired with arguably independent offspring, the garden is still not the Eden I envision and that bugs me. My coping strategies for gardening problems resemble my child-rearing practices: tolerate small imperfections, seek information before acting, start with benign solutions and escalate with caution.

Take Black Spot, *Diplocarpan rosae*, an unsightly fungus specific to roses as an illustrative case. Because our climate creates conditions where fungus often grows better than roses, choosing varieties resistant to Black Spot ought to be a priority. Nursery tags should state the degree of resistance or susceptibility. Modern roses are more susceptible than old or species types. For instance, *Rosa rugosa*, *R.* 'Mutabilis', *R. glauca*, and my Northwest natives have never been infected while David Austin roses suffered a significant infection for the first time in 5 years, as did my hearty climber 'Joseph's Coat'. Tolerating a few black spots, and removing affected leaves is a benign management strategy. But that really did not suffice during last year's wet, cool spring and summer.

So I went to school and learned all I could about Black Spot. It spreads by water and thrives on moisture. So best practice would obviously be to keep leaves and stems dry as possible. Siting roses where morning sun dries them and shines at least 8 hours, adequate spacing that promotes optimal air circulation, and watering at the base to keep leaves dry create conditions that discourage fungus. It overwinters on old affected leaves and canes. So management includes meticulous garden hygiene. That means removing every dropped leaf and disposing of it which reduces fungal spore loads. Cutting back affected canes during annual pruning this month also helps. Never compost infected leaves and canes because spores persist for a long time ready to grow when conditions are right.

This year my regimen will be to observe carefully for spots. Keep up the hygiene. If problems persist at intolerable levels, an application of a product containing fixed copper may also be useful. Or I might just replace the susceptible varieties with something equally lovely, but not a rose.

Resources: Pacific Northwest Landscape Integrated Pest Management (IPM) Manual, WSU Cooperative Extension.
<http://pep.wsu.edu/hortsense/>