Black Spot

While there are many different types of leaf spot – localized lesions on host leaves consisting of dead and collapsed cells – this article will concentrate on Black Spot of roses. The fungus *Diplocarpon rosae* causes black spot. Feathery, circular black spots occur on the upper surface of leaves. These spots are often surrounded by a yellow circle or "halo". The infected leaves will turn yellow and fall off prematurely. Purple-red lesions may also develop on the first-year canes.

The fungus overwinters as perithecia (pinhead-sized flash shaped fruiting bodies) in leaf debris during the winter. In the spring, the airborne spores are released, which give rise to the primary infections. From these infections, the disease is further spread by rain splashing the spores to other leaf surfaces.

You may prevent or at least minimize the occurrence of black spot by taking the following precautions:

- Allow for free circulation of air around rose bushes and thereby reduce the humidity level.
- Prune your bushes so that the centers are not congested.
- Water at the base of roses and not the leaves.
- Praactice good sanitation.

Sanitation is the most important measure for controlling black spot. You should begin with a thorough clean-up in the fall. Diseased canes should be pruned off, and all diseased leaves should be raked up and destroyed. **Do not put them in the compost pile!** These precautions should reduce the possibility of overwintering the fungi.

If a preventive fungicide program is used, start before the leaves become spotted. From then until frost, additional applications may be necessary. There are a number of rose sprays and dusts on the market. Always consult the label for specific instructions and information on timing and rates of application.

Resources

Rose: Black spot. Washington State University Hortsense.

Plant Disease Clinic – Highlights Iowa State University of Science and Technology, Horticulture & Home Pest News website.

Macunovich, Janet. Spraying plants can help control black spot fungus on leaves The Detroit News, Aug. 19, 2000.