

# Diagnose The Disease



Gardeners worry about fungus infections appearing in their gardens. Usually, however, the problem can be prevented with good management. When black spot or rust does appear, treatment is quite simple.



## *Some Harmful Fungi*

**Black spot** is caused by many different kinds of fungi, each of which attack only one or two species of plants. The circular black spots develop first on the top of leaves, which will turn yellow and drop. Lesions may also develop on stems or branches.

**Peach leaf curl** causes the edges of the leaves to become wrinkled, twisted, and curled. They often show a change in color, to yellow or shades of purple and red. Then the leaves turn brown and drop. A severe infection can defoliate an entire tree.

**Powdery mildew** first appears as small white spots on the leaves and stems. They gradually increase in size to cover large areas of the leaf. The spores of powdery mildew generally require high humidity in order to germinate. Once the fungus is growing, it can survive in very dry conditions with just the nightly dews to provide adequate moisture to spread the disease. The fungus spreads a mass of fungal threads and spores across the surface of the leaves and stems.

**Rose Black Spot** Without treating this disease the spots resemble a circle with fringed edges. The leaves turn yellow and fall to the ground. When the new leaves are produced they can also be infected. Poor growth of the rose bush will result in few, small growing flowers. Continuous defoliation of the rose bush will weaken the plant and then die back, followed by death will result.

**Clematis wilt** is caused by the fungus *Phoma clematizans*. One or more clematis shoot will start to wilt at the tip or at a leaf and the wilt will spread downward rapidly. The leaf stalks become black and newly-infected stems blacken internally. This fungus can remain in the soil for many months in old infected plant material.

## *Prevention & Control*

Fungi are spread by spores. The spores are most commonly dispersed by wind and by water splash. They are more likely to grow if they land in moist areas.

Making sure your garden has good air circulation will reduce fungus problems. Don't space plants too closely, and prune shrubs and trees as needed. Don't allow clumps of weeds to invade garden beds.

Water your garden in the morning. This will allow foliage to dry completely, making it less hospitable to spores.

If you notice infected leaves, remove them immediately. Pick up any possibly infected leaves that have fallen to the ground. Cut diseased canes or stalks to the ground or, if necessary, below the ground. Don't compost this material – destroy it!

In the autumn, remove all dead plant material from species most susceptible to infection. Destroy it.

## *Treatment*

Fungicides can stop the disease from spreading and getting worse, but it won't make it go away, **The best time to treat for fungus is before it begins.** They are available in liquid and powder forms, and can be sprayed or dusted on garden plants. Be very careful to follow safety instructions carefully, as either kind can be harmful to humans and animals if applied incorrectly.

Organic gardeners often use **neem oil** to prevent spread of various fungi.



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