

The week ahead

TUESDAY HEALTHY LIVING

CALM BETWEEN DAILY STORMS: Relax your cares away with our seventh Healthy Virtue

WEDNESDAY TASTE

OKRA — YOU KNOW YOU LOVE IT: It's not just a Southern thing, with recipes from Thailand, India and Africa

NEXT WEEK HOME

GREEN ACRES, IN CENTRAL TEXAS: Fredericksburg farmstead goes green without sacrificing casual, inviting style

Today on dallasnews.com

Flies bugging you?

☑ **Online:** Find out how to discourage flies, and post comments about your infestation.
dallasnews.com/extra



Deviled eggs

♂ **Online:** See executive chef Blythe Beck of Hector's on Henderson make Lobster and Caviar Deviled Eggs.
dallasnews.com/lifestyles

Major motivation

■ **Video:** With boot camp fitness classes, intensity and variety are the order of the day.
dallasnews.com/lifestyles

HOME

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What will repel chiggers?

Do you know of anything besides sulfur that will repel chiggers? My son gets chigger bites all over his body, and sulfur doesn't seem to work for him.

B.B., Fort Worth

A wildflower called horsemint or lemon mint crushed and rubbed on fresh or dusted on as a dry powder will repel chiggers. Spraying the yard with my Garrett Juice formula with 2 ounces of orange oil added to each gallon will greatly reduce the chigger population. My formula for fire ant mound drench also will work (see Resources).

I have a large compost pile that contains mostly yard debris and dog waste. I want to buy some dung beetles to rid the compost of the dog waste. I searched the Internet but can't find anyone who sells these insects. Do you know where I can buy them?

S.J., Mesquite

All I can suggest is to contact insectaries such as M&R Durango Inc. (www.goodbug.com; 1-800-526-4075) or Rincon-Vitova (www.rinconvitova.com; 1-800-248-2847). If they don't sell dung beetles, maybe they know who does.

You really don't need the beetles. If you add paper, other dry materials and sugar of some sort (molasses is best), the manure and other ingredients will break down into nice compost.

What are the proportions of dishwashing detergent and water used to spray plants for pests?

J.B., Fort Worth

Any liquid soap can be used as an organic pesticide by mixing 1 teaspoon to 1 tablespoon of soap per gallon of water. The best

ORGANIC ANSWERS



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soaps for this use are lemon-scented Joy, Dr. Bronner's peppermint and a new product called Plant Wash. (If you can't find Plant Wash in stores, try the manufacturer's Web site, www.soilmender.com.)

Could the fungicidal properties of cornmeal be caused by a fungicide applied to corn plants to treat the disease called corn smut?

J.B., Dallas

No. Cornmeal works by stimulating beneficial microorganisms. I know that chemical residue does not cause this because organically grown corn is the best type to use as a natural fungus control.

We have rural property where cattle are grazing. However, the property has lots of doveweed, which the cattle won't eat. This weed chokes out the grasses the cattle need. Is there a way to get rid of it organically?

S.E., Sherman

Doveweed is a member of the croton family, and it also is known by other names, including goatweed and skunkweed.

A temporary solution is spraying the weeds with a vinegar formula to kill this season's crop. The permanent solution is to improve the soil with compost, manures and rock powders. As a first step toward a long-term solution, apply dry molasses at a

rate of at least 100 pounds per acre; 200 to 300 pounds per acre would be even better.

I have a post oak tree in my back yard, and I noticed a red growth at its base that looked as if it had oozed out of the bark. It grew for a while, then dried up. We broke it off with a shovel, but I've noticed that it is growing again. Is this some sort of fungus? It was definitely connected to the tree.

A.H., Keller

It's probably the fruiting body of a fungus inside the tree. It could have been caused by an injury to the trunk, poor drainage, contaminated soil, etc. The solution is to use my Sick Tree Treatment (see Resources).

We have lots of ground corn cobs leftover from a corn cob blasting job at an old log cabin. It's supposedly chemical-free. Can we use it to enrich the soil? It is very fine, so I don't think it would make good mulch.

K.S., Denton

It can be added to soil or a compost pile.

Bugs are eating my hostas. What can I do?

D.T., Irving

Use Sluggo or coffee grounds on the soil around the hostas to get rid of snails and slugs. Next spring, treat the soil with beneficial nematodes just as the leaves start to emerge.

RESOURCES

ONLINE: www.dirtdoctor.com for free organic-program handouts
RADIO: KSKY-AM (660), Saturday 11 a.m.-noon and Sunday 8-11 a.m. www.ksky.com
MAIL: P.O. Box 140650, Dallas, TX 75214

CHORES



NATALIE CAUDILL/Staff Photographer

These rose leaves show signs of the fungus blackspot.

Rain brings out blackspot, which can kill roses

By RICK ROSEN
Staff Writer
rosen@dallasnews.com

Our recent monsoon produced a bumper crop of the fungal disease blackspot on rosebushes.

The bad news? If leaves on your rosebushes show the tell-tale spots, it is too late to save the leaves. The good news? It's not difficult to prevent the disease from claiming your bush.

Blackspot is caused by the *Diplocarpon rosae* fungus. It is easily recognizable: circular black spots with irregular edges on the tops of leaves. The spotted leaves often turn yellow and tend to drop off at the slightest touch.

Marian Buchanan, a consulting rosarian with the American Rose Society and past president of the Collin County Rose Society, says the rain we had recently creates a perfect environment for the fungus to grow.

"By the time you see it on your roses, it's too late to treat for it," she says. But it is not too late to prevent blackspot from spreading.

The key to preventing its spread is to spray regularly with a fungicide, Ms. Buchanan says. Spray every seven to 10 days with a fungicide designed for ornamental plants. Such products are available at any nursery or garden center. Be sure to follow directions and warnings on the label.

You may need to shorten the interval between sprayings if it rains, she says. If we return to our usual dry summers, you may be

able to lengthen the time between sprayings.

Along with spraying, there are measures that can help prevent the disease, according to the American Rose Society:

■ Avoid watering in a way that splashes water up on the leaves, and avoid watering late in the evening with a hose or sprayer.

■ Clean leaves and stems from beds during the winter to keep the disease from wintering over.

■ Make sure bushes have good ventilation and good drainage.

Old World roses and hybrid tea roses both are susceptible to blackspot. Ms. Buchanan says old roses are hardier and recover better from an infestation of the fungal disease than do hybrids.

The disease can kill hybrids in a couple of years, she notes.

Perhaps the best way to prevent blackspot from being a problem is to plant disease-resistant types.

Ms. Buchanan, who also is a master gardener, a program sponsored by Texas Cooperative Extension, says EarthKind rose bushes are the answer. Though not immune to blackspot, EarthKind bushes, developed by the extension service, are resistant. And the extension service's studies have shown that EarthKind roses generally don't need any spraying, a plus for homeowners who dislike using chemicals.

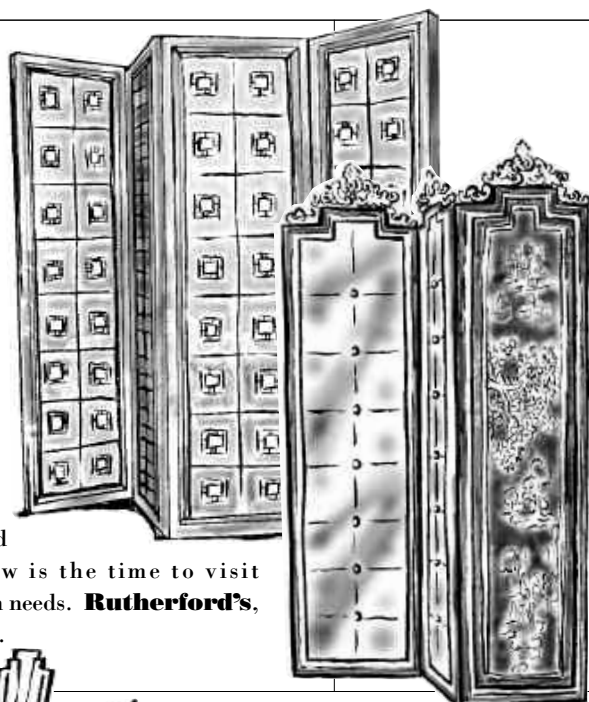
Though blackspot has increased exponentially here, Ms. Buchanan says other common rose diseases are at normal levels.

Shopping the town

The Designers Group
The Designers Group has an impressive selection of the finest costume jewelry available, with pieces from the vintage collections of Chanel, Ciner and Hattie Carnegie. Browse through their extensive collection today. The Designers Group is located in **Forestwood Antique Mall**, 5333 Forest Lane, Dallas. Open daily 10 a.m. - 7 p.m., Sunday 11 a.m. - 6 p.m., 972-661-0001.

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Divide your space with an elegant antique-finish mirrored screen, detailed with chinoiserie paintings on its back. Use these beautiful room dividers and screens to create cozy nooks or private spaces in your home or loft. Choose from many styles and finishes, including sophisticated and contemporary looks. Now is the time to visit Rutherford's for your summer design needs. **Rutherford's**, 5417 W. Lovers Lane, 214-357-0888.



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