

TOP TEN PESTS AND DISEASES

1. **Vine Weevil** - this is a common and widespread problem. There are 2 main methods of control, biological and chemical. Biological control uses the introduction of natural predators (nematodes, or microscopic worms) into the soil or pots and they move through the ground and kill the grubs that cause the root damage. This method relies on specific conditions such as warm temperatures, so can only be used from April until September. The chemical control is with the product Provado, from Bio, and is simply mixed up and drenched onto the soil or pots. The plants take up the insecticide and will protect themselves against attack for 6 months. Another method is the use of Plant Protection compost from Scotts. This also contains an insecticide that will protect for 6 months, but must only be used on ornamental plants.

2. **Aphids** - greenfly, blackfly are all aphids and can be a huge pest, especially during the early part of the season. They tend to attack the lovely young growing tips or leaves of plants, eating the sap and causing the plant to distort and leaves to curl up. There are many insecticides available such as, Bio Organic Pest Control and Bug Clear. To gain good control start early in the season as they reproduce at an incredible rate, spraying at fortnightly intervals will give good control.

3. **Blackspot** - common on roses and is widespread in the countryside as it enjoys the clean air. The best form of control is prevention. Starting in the autumn good hygiene is essential, pick up and remove old leaves and prunings as the spores will over winter on these. Repeat this in the early spring and then apply a fresh mulch of bark or organic matter. This helps the plants to grow as well as 'trapping' any spores in the soil. Once the leaves start to emerge then start a spray programme applying either, Roseclear3, Multirose, Systhane Fungus fighter once a fortnight to gain good control and beautiful roses.

4. **Mildew** - powdery mildew is easy to identify by the white powdery dusting that appears on the foliage or stems of the infected plant. It is caused by high humidity and dry roots so for greenhouse or indoor plants you can have some control by ensuring good ventilation. You can also improve ventilation on individual plants in the garden by thinning branches, creating an open shape that the air can move easily through. To treat an attack spray with a fungicide such as, Fungus Clear, Roseclear3, Systhane Fungus Fighter. Check the labels for suitability for your plants.

5. **Scale Insect** - is often found on greenhouse or conservatory plants and is easily identified by the stickiness on the tops of leaves which then turns black with the invasion of sooty mould. Scale insects tend to congregate on the back axis of the leaf or along the stems of plant. They look like miniature limpets fixed to the plant where they suck the sap. To control scale you can either wipe the plant over with a mild soapy solution or methylated spirits or use a spray such as Bio Organic Pest Control, ensuring good contact with the pests.

6. **Whitefly** - a very common greenhouse pest. Control can be achieved in three ways, chemical, physical or biological. The chemical method is with the use of insecticide sprays such as Bug Clear or Bio Organic Pest Control, sprayed on a regular basis. A very simple physical method ideal for normal domestic greenhouses is the use of yellow sticky traps. These work by attracting the whitefly and literally getting them stuck! In a small greenhouse you will have good control. For larger greenhouses biological control is more effective, this works by introducing a natural predator of whitefly (encarsia formosa - a tiny wasp) which attacks whitefly larvae. Control will last for up to 6 weeks.

7. **Sooty Mould** - this is the result of an attack by an insect such as aphid or scale insect. The symptoms are a black sooty coating appearing on the upper sides of the leaves. This mould is growing on the sticky honeydew, which is a by-product of the sap-sucking insects previously mentioned. To treat sooty mould can be time consuming and the first stage is to physically wipe the leaves clean, with a mild soapy solution. Follow this with a treatment suitable for the insect causing the problem in the first place.

8. **Peach Leaf Curl** - a distorting disease that occurs on peaches and nectarines. Prevention is better than cure. With the plants in leaf there is no way of controlling the disease other than picking off infected leaves and burning them. The time to control is from leaf fall in the autumn until leaf break in the spring. In the autumn pick up any fallen leaves and spray the plant with Traditional Copper Fungicide or Dithane 945. Cover the tree with horticultural fleece during the winter to keep off spores carried in the winter rains. Spray before the flowers open in the early spring and then soon after petal fall. Control will not be complete but infection will be reduced significantly.

9. **Botrytis** - or grey mould is a fungi that forms at the base of fleshy or young plants. It is often caused by over watering or lack of air movement so can be easily prevented. Treatments are best done by removal of infected parts and reduce watering, and increase ventilation, or air circulation around the plant.

10. **Clematis Wilt** - often misunderstood the symptoms of the plant suddenly wilting leading you to believe that there is a terrible fungus at work. This is not always the case as other problems such as slugs damaging the stems near the base, or damage by a stray hoe or rake will cause the same effect. Another possible reason is that the plant grows too quickly and the roots are insufficient to support all the new growth so it collapses. To treat when it occurs it is best to trim the plant back, removing the affected stems, feed the plant with a good feed such as Vitax Q4, water well and wait. 9 times out of 10 it will re-shoot and be perfectly happy. As a precaution drench the plant and ground with Dithane 945.