



## RENO ROSE SOCIETY

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*"And the desert shall rejoice and blossom as the rose."*

*Isaiah, Chapter 35*

### DORMANT SEASON CONTROL OF ROSE PESTS AND DISEASES Ann Marie Harris

Many of us use various methods to attempt to control insects, mildew and other rose diseases which would otherwise weaken or kill the roses or would grossly disfigure the blooms and foliage. Because of the increased concern regarding use of toxic pesticides in the home garden, I recommend establishing a winter and early spring program to prevent the populations of pests and diseases from ever being an uncontrollable problem.

The first part of this program is keeping the garden clean of dead leaves and cuttings. This material provides an excellent hiding place for eggs, overwintering insects and spores which could later multiply and cause you to resort to stronger and more deadly pesticides. You can further eliminate hiding spots by stripping the leaves before the second dormant-season spraying; this will also help reduce the spring pest population.

The second part of the program is dormant-season spraying. Ideally, roses in Northern Nevada should be sprayed at least twice while the roses are dormant. Ideally you should spray once in mid-December and again when you have just completed your spring pruning between April 5th and April 25th. I normally use a lime-sulfur solution along with a dormant oil which reduces fungus spores and kill insects and their eggs. This year I plan to add spraying with a copper-based spray about 6 weeks before using lime-sulfur spray in April. Although these materials are some of the least toxic you can use, you should still wear protective clothing as these sprays are strong eye and skin irritants and can, if mishandled, cause chemical burns.

If you had a very severe infestation of powdery or downy mildew and are willing to use a more toxic material, Captain 50W or diazinon can be added to the lime-sulfur solution. If you need information regarding use of Captain 50W or diazinon with the lime-sulfur and dormant oils, contact any of your local Consulting Rosarians.

Commercially available lime-sulfur solutions are generally sold as emulsions containing 24 to 30 percent calcium polysulfide. The lime-sulfur solution is particularly good for reduction of mildew, black spot, rust and spider mites. An additional benefit of using a lime-sulfur spray is the reduction of soil pH. Examples of locally available lime-sulfur products include Lilly Miller Polysul Summer & Dormant Spray Concentrate, Ortho Dormant Disease Control, Ortho Orthorix Spray, and Cooke Sulfur Spray.

Dormant oils are liquids which consist of 95 to 98 percent petroleum oil which is formulated to be toxic to insects. These oils kill mostly by suffocating the insects and their eggs.

Insects most susceptible to these sprays include aphids, spider mites, scale insects and mealybugs. The oils also provide a protective coating over the buds which helps reduce later attacks by insects and fungus before spring. Locally available products include Ortho Volck Supreme Oil Spray and Ortho Volck Oil Spray.

Combining the lime-sulfur and oil sprays provides the most control for the least effort. Dexol's Calsul Spray is a combination of lime-sulfur and oil consisting of 67.9% oil and 1% calcium polysulfide. If you cannot find a premixed product, some of the other commercially available horticultural oil sprays can be mixed with the lime-sulfur solutions to eliminate the need for multiple sprayings. You can test whether these products can be used together by mixing a test amount and seeing if the mixture curdles. If the mixture curdles, it will plug up your sprayer and you will not be able to apply the spray to the plants.

The materials you purchase for dormant-season spraying are concentrated solutions and must be diluted before being applied to the roses. Follow the instructions on the product label. If you do not understand the instructions, telephone your Consulting Rosarians or your local County Extension Service. If you have never applied pesticides by spraying, you can learn how to handle sprays safely by practicing with the oil sprays before using any of the more toxic and dangerous sprays. These are the least toxic of any sprays you will probably ever use and have been listed as non-toxic to wildlife and pets (in small doses).

The sprays are applied to every part of the rose to kill pests which would otherwise be able to overwinter on the plant's buds, canes and bark. In addition, spray the soil around the rose because this area can harbor disease spores and insect eggs left from fallen leaves and cuttings.

Dormant spraying should not be done if the bud-eyes are starting to develop foliage and pruning is done late. The dormant spray materials will severely burn the new growth. If you miss the time for the last dormant spray, immediately begin the growing season spraying program after pruning. Again, do not forget to spray the ground around the rose.

For the last several years, I have been using a product called Cloud Cover to reduce the amount of mildew on roses. A similar product sold as "Wiltpruf" probably has the same effect. This product is sprayed on the foliage after the buds have produced leaves. It creates a barrier which prevents any spores landing on the plant from getting through to infect the plant. Cloud Cover is marketed as an antitranspirant and should not be used during warmer parts of the summer. It is also not as toxic as the regular season sprays.

Part of your dormant season preparation should also include checking your garden tools and supplies. Winter is a good time to send your pruners and saws out for sharpening and repair. You should also know when your last tetanus shot was. If your immunization is not current, you run a risk of getting tetanus from rose thorn punctures and other cuts you might get gardening.

This year the Reno Rose Society is scheduling a number of events for everyone to learn about rose horticulture. Please join us for our annual Pruning demonstration the last Saturday every March where you can ask about dormant season control and other aspects of growing beautiful roses.