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Arkansas Plant Health Clinic Newsletter

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Roses

If bad weather prevented you from pruning your roses in February, now is the time to prune. Basic rose pruning involves removing dead, damaged, or diseased branches. Improperly pruned roses have more dieback than those which are pruned properly. Dieback occurs when a pruning cut has been made in the middle of a branch as opposed to at the bud eye. Because the rose directs growth into the terminal bud, any portion of the branch left between the pruning cut and next bud will die back. Dead wood is usually brown or even black in color. How much to prune live canes depends on both what type of rose you are pruning and how large a plant you want. For example, Hybrid Teas will have fewer blooms when pruned short, but the blooms will be larger. People who show Hybrid Teas Roses prune this way. However tall you want a Hybrid Tea, all canes smaller than a pencil should be removed from the base of the rose. All canes crossing each other through the middle should be removed. Always prune right above an outward facing eye. For Shrub Roses such as Knockout Roses, we recommend removing at least 1/3 of the height as we know the mite that vectors Rose Rosette Disease overwinters in the top

third of the plant. Climbing Roses that rebloom need any dead or damaged canes removed. If it is a Once Blooming Rose, do not prune before bloom in the spring or you will prune out all the coming season's blooms. Prune Once Bloomers immediately after they finish blooming.

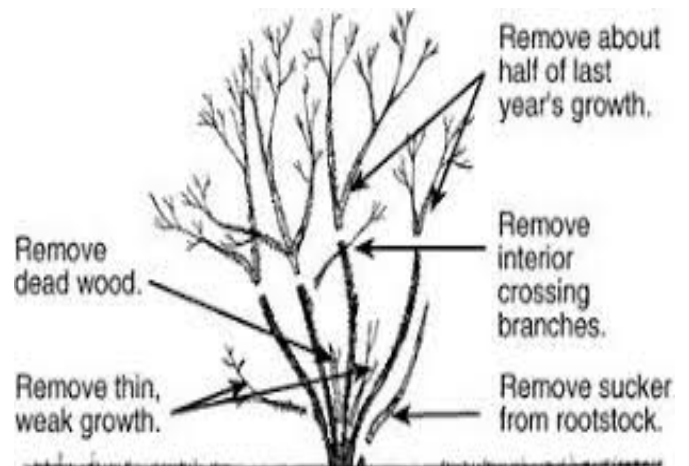


Photo by Deenursery.com

Azalea

Many azalea are suffering from freeze injury this year. Wait until all danger of a late frost is over before pruning out dead stems. We are also seeing Azalea Leaf Spot, caused by the fungus *Cercospora handellii*. This disease usually becomes noticeable in the spring, although symptoms may not appear until fall or in the following spring on one-year old leaves. At least two months pass between infection and the appearance of the lesions. Symptoms are brown, circular to irregular spots on the lower leaves. Centers of the spots become gray with age. Tiny black fruiting bodies may be seen in



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the center of the spots with a hand lens. Although severe infections can cause leaf drop late in the season, fungicides are usually not necessary. Rake and destroy fallen leaves. Avoid overhead irrigation. If chemical control is desired, apply thiophanate methyl, chlorothalonil, myclobutanil, or mancozeb to protect leaves before infection in the spring.

Azalea Leaf Spot-*Cercospora handelii*



Photo by Shawn Payne, University of Arkansas Cooperative Extension

Azalea Leaf Spot-*Cercospora handelii*



Photo by Mitch Spanel

Azalea Leaf Spot-*Cercospora handelii*



Photo by Sherrie Smith, University of Arkansas Cooperative Extension

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Plums and Cherries

Our stone fruit trees have not leafed out yet. As a result of increased visibility of branches during the dormant period, some homeowners are noticing black, knobby galls on the branches of their cherries or plums. The common name of the disease is Black Knot, caused by *Apiosporina morbosa* (*Dibotryon morbosum*). This is a common fungal disease of *Prunus* spp. Yield losses result from extensive dieback of girdled limbs and stunting of growth beyond the knots. Trees can be severely weakened, disfigured, and in extreme cases killed because of infection. Prunes, Plums, Sweet Cherries, and Sour Cherries are all hosts for Black Knot. Rarely do we receive a peach sample with Black Knot. Wild Cherries and Plums serve as continuous sources of inoculum. The first symptoms are small, light brown swellings usually located at the base of the leaf petiole or on the fruit spur. These appear during the summer and first year after infection. Young knots may have an olive-green color, but later become hard, brittle, and black in color. Older knots are coal-black in color and hard in texture. The knots often protrude more on one side of the affected branch. Control starts with pruning. Prune out and destroy all visible knots before new growth starts in the spring. The cuts should be made at least 6-8 inches below the lowest part of the knot. Cut out knots on large main branches and trunks with a knife or chisel, including an inch of healthy bark around the knot. Never purchase plants showing knots or abnormal swellings on the twigs and branches. All clippings should be burned, buried or otherwise removed from the property.

Mancozeb, Captan, Topsin M, or fungicides containing chlorothalonil are helpful in controlling Black Knot if the cultural controls are also practiced. Apply first spray in the spring just as green tissue begins to appear. Spray again just before and after bloom. Spray at 2-week intervals until new growth stops. Lime-sulfur sprayed during the dormant season is also helpful. Wild Cherries and Plums within 600 feet of the orchard should be removed when possible to prevent spores blowing into the orchard and causing new infections. Some Plum cultivars are resistant to Black Knot. The cultivars Stanley, Damson, Bluefree, and Shropshire are considered highly susceptible; Fellenburg, Methley, Milton, Bradshaw, and Early Italian are moderately susceptible; Formosa, Shiro, and Santa Rose are slightly susceptible; and President is considered highly resistant.

Black Knot from this season that's sporulating-*Apiosporina morbosa*



Photo by Sherrie Smith, University of Arkansas Cooperative Extension

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Black Knot from current season-
Apiosporina morbosa



Photo by Sherrie Smith, University of Arkansas Cooperative Extension

Black Knot from last season-
Apiosporina morbosa



Photo by Keri Weatherford, University of Arkansas Cooperative Extension

This bulletin from the Cooperative Extension Plant Health Clinic (Plant Disease Clinic) is an electronic update about diseases and other problems observed in our lab each month. Input from everybody interested in plants is welcome and appreciated.

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