



## Roses are Red...

Well, they're red, and pink, and yellow, and, well, you know. Roses are one of those shrubs that seem to invoke one of two emotions – either absolute contempt for the work they may be perceived to require, or complete adoration. I fall under the latter category, and believe any work they require is time and effort well spent in exchange for their deep green foliage and beautiful flowers.

I will concede that there are many times that growing roses in Nebraska might seem like more effort than it's worth. Finding the right type of rose for our growing conditions is imperative to having healthy, almost-carefree shrubs.

Most roses fall into one of four categories. Floribunda and grandiflora are two that have medium-sized blooms on shrub-type plants. Hybrid teas are usually more upright in their growth habit, and generally have large blooms. There are many teas that are suited for Nebraska's summer humidity and winter cold, but overall, many teas can be the most troubled by disease and insects. Shrub roses are the fourth category and in recent years, a lot of breeding and development of shrub roses has been done. The ever popular 'Knockout' rose is a perfect example of a shrub rose. Generally, these can be pretty disease and insect resistant, but the scent and appearance of the blooms is usually sacrificed for low-maintenance.

Regardless of type, roses, like any other ornamental shrub, can be afflicted by disease, and/or insect damage. Currently, there have been some samples that have come into the office that have shown symptoms of rose slugs. Rose slugs are a fairly common pest, and can be found on any type of rose. Rose slugs are usually light green in color, about ½" – ¾" long, and generally look more like a caterpillar than a slug. Slugs are the larval stage of what will become a flying insect called a sawfly.

Adult sawflies emerge in early spring, mate and lay their eggs on leaves of rose bushes, usually on the underside of the leaf. When the larvae emerge, they feed on the leaves, eating the layer of green tissue between the veins. At first this damage will look clear, or like a frosted windowpane, but will eventually turn brown. After they feed, they drop to the ground where they pupate and the cycle repeats itself. The best defense against rose slugs is regular monitoring of your shrubs. Hand-picking them is the easiest way to control them, especially if you find them before they do too much damage. A strong stream of water can usually knock them off the plant as well, just make sure to spray on the undersides of the leaves as well as the top.

Japanese beetles will eventually begin showing up in your yard, if they haven't already. These little pests can do serious damage to a large number of ornamental plants, vegetables, and turfgrass. They can often be found feeding on rose foliage, as well as flowers. When there are large populations of Japanese beetles, the damage can be quite severe, leaving leaves skeletonized and flowers decimated. Removing by hand in the morning is easy, and safe - just throw them in a bucket of soapy water! Chemical treatment might be required if you have a large number of adults feeding.

Even though we usually talk about insects that are pests, there is actually, more beneficial insects in the world, than those that cause harm. Leaf cutter bees are one such insect, and I have seen signs of their presence in my own backyard just this week. Leafcutter bees are solitary, meaning they don't live in a hive with many other bees. Female bees will cut almost perfect circles from different leaves to create their nest where they will then lay their eggs. They often nest in rotting wood, or hollow stems, such as old rose canes. Their damage rarely, if ever, causes real damage to the health of the plant, but can be a cause of concern when the damage is seen, and the cause for it is unknown. Leafcutter bees are very important native pollinators, so when I see their 'damage,' I'm just happy they're in my garden.

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