



FROM A GARDENING PERSPECTIVE...

ROSE ROSETTE, The Virus that is Killing Roses

By

Karen Brown, Palo Pinto County Master Gardener

If you are an enthusiastic gardener, you already have roses or you will try growing them some day. There are things to watch for that can cause problems with some roses but the new Earthkind types have made it much easier to grow roses with little extra care.

In the last year or so there has been much said about a disease that is killing many roses in McKinney and Dallas. There have been fewer cases in Fort Worth and Weatherford. This disease is a virus and is called Rose Rosette. It is not a new virus. It has been around for over 70 years, but in recent years roses have become much more popular. Knock Out roses have been overused in landscape use and this overuse of one plant is making the disease spread more rapidly. Many Knock Out roses have been removed from public gardens and some nurseries are no longer selling them. This disease can attack any rose, not just Knock Outs.

If gardeners will educate themselves on how to recognize this disease and what to do with the sick plants, then it will be something that can be controlled. Rose rosette is spread by tiny microscopic mites called eriophyid mites. They attach themselves to insects or blow in the wind to travel from plant to plant. There is no treatment that will save infected plants. It is recommended to plant roses with plenty of open space around them to reduce the opportunity of the mites to travel from one rose to the other. Infected roses need to be completely removed, roots and all, placed in a plastic bag and put in the garbage. Don't compost them! After about a week, the spot can be replanted.

The symptoms can vary, so here are several to watch for:

1. Irregular growth that doesn't look normal
2. Extremely thorny new growth

3. Long new growth that is larger than the stem it grows out of
4. “Witches broom” type growth with leaf distortion
5. Misshapen buds and blooms
6. New growth that is red and bushy and gnarly looking
7. New growth that is green and gnarly.

As is seen from these symptoms, it can be hard to tell at first. Pictures help, so please consult the Aggie Horticulture website at aggie-horticulture@tamu.edu and enter rose rosette to view some photos. Call the extension office if you have questions. 940-659-1228