



Perennial and Rose Gardening Newsletter

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"Gardening – It's cheaper than psychotherapy."

Remember:

1. *Thrips can ruin your blooms.*
2. *Chemical sprays can control them. ConserveSC, Merit, TalStar One, etc.*
3. *Cover up when spraying and read label directions!!*

Tiny Pests – Big Problems!

By: Charles Bankston, contact: growit@perennialandrosegardening.net

We patiently wait and watch for new rose buds to appear out of the lush green foliage and finger prune the side shoots so that the remaining center bud forms into what we hope will be a prized specimen. We pamper the little one, feed it with nutrients, give it drink when it's thirsty and then after roughly one month from its inception we begin to see the first signs of color on the little guy. We anxiously wait to see what will be . . . the perfect bloom perhaps? Or less than perfect? Or worse, a bloom ruined by tiny, near microscopic pests called none other than Thrips. These pests favor light colored rose blooms, but I doubt any bloom is immune to these pests. I seriously doubt these pests would leave a black rose bloom alone, much less a light pink or heaven forbid a white rose bloom. In our garden in the deep south I find these pests ever-enduring even after several doses of my concoctions or chemical spraying sprees. However, I have discovered a few tricks that seem to help with the control of these pests....and I do mean PESTS!

So what to do?

First, I began noticing that the thrips were much more active and present in the late evening versus the early morning hours. With this information I decided to change my spraying schedule to late evenings just before sunset. I know, I know...you're saying, ". . . but I was told not to spray my plants in the late evening as that would foster fungi growth and disease". There is truth to this. However, if one is following a regular spray program for disease, it is my opinion that this shouldn't be a concern of yours. I've been spraying for diseases every 10 days and have been spraying my plants in the late evenings for years and have yet to see signs of black spot or the other nasty disease symptoms helped along by wet foliage. So now that we've got that out of the way, let's continue. . .So I began spraying just before sunset and noticed that I was killing 90% of the little critters based on my own scientific calculations. Before, I was noticing only about a 50% kill rate. The chemicals that I rotate are called: Conserve SC and TalStar One. Another good one that I sometimes use is Merit WP. Beware not to use any one chemical for more than 3 times in a row as thrips reproduce so quickly that their subsequent generations (children) can and will begin to build up an immunity to the chemical product should that chemical be used too frequently on generation after generation of insect. Thus, I make every effort to spray one chemical exactly 3 times every 5 days and then I rotate to the next chemical in my arsenal. I only spray this frequently during the heaviest infestations—some years this has been the entire growing season. Yes, that's what I said...every 5 days for the entire growing season. Hey, I do what it takes to produce the best looking roses possible. I'm a perfectionist at heart. It's what I do.