

## RABBITS IN THE GARDEN

Rabbits in gardens are a perennial problem because of the wide variety of plants they can feed on. This time of year, they gravitate to young vegetables and flowers. But there are some vegetables that are rarely bothered including potatoes, tomatoes, corn, squash, cucumbers, and some peppers. The question is how do you protect other, more susceptible plants? Fencing provides a quick and effective control method. The fence does not need to be tall; 2 feet is sufficient for cottontails. But the mesh must be sufficiently fine (1 inch or less) so young rabbits will not be able to go through it. Support for the fence can be supplied by a number of products, but electric fence posts work well. Often fencing is not an acceptable choice because it affects the attractiveness of the garden. Other ways to control rabbits include repellents, trapping and shooting. Repellents are often suggested for control but often do not last long and require frequent application. Also, many are poisonous and cannot be used on plants or plant parts destined for human consumption. Live traps can be used to collect and move the rabbits to a rural area several miles from where they were trapped. A number of baits can be used to entice the rabbit to enter the trap including a tightly rolled cabbage leaf held together with a toothpick. However, rabbits often avoid baits if other attractive food is available. Another possibility is to use a motion-activated sprinkler. These are attached to a garden hose and release a short burst of water when motion is detected. Contech, Orbit and Havahart are suppliers and each is advertised as protecting up to at least 1,000 square feet. Shooting is another possibility when it is safe and legal to do so.

## *Peaches and Apricots*

Many parts of Kansas will have a peach and apricot crop that wasn't badly hurt by late frosts. To take advantage of this good fortune certain things should be done as the fruit matures to ensure a good harvest.

*Control insects and diseases:* Though it is too late to control peach leaf curl, it is possible to control scab and brown rot. Insects of concern are plum curculio, oriental fruit moth, plant bugs, and stink bugs. Use Captan or Immunox to control diseases, and malathion to control insects. Spray every 10 to 14 days. Pay heed to the waiting period between the last spray and harvest.

*Thin peaches:* Thin peaches to 1 every 6 to 8 inches of leafed out branch to maximize fruit size and to decrease the load on the branches. As a general rule, we need about 40 leaves per peach for maximum quality. Peaches are borne in clusters, so calculate how many a branch can support by dividing the length of the branch in inches by 7. As long as there is an average of 7 inches of branch length per peach, it doesn't matter whether the peaches are in clusters or not.

*Water Trees as Needed:* The most critical time for adequate water is during the pit hardening stage which usually lasts between 2 to 4 weeks. Cut open a few peaches to determine when the pit starts to harden or become woody. Irregular watering during this period can lead to split peaches.

*Prop up branches if needed:* Prop up branches if the fruit load is so heavy the tree may break apart. Use boards with a "V" cut in one end to support the branch. Prune the branch back to a smaller side branch next spring (March).

## *Blackspot of Roses*

A common disease of roses is blackspot, a fungus disease that can cause defoliation of susceptible plants. Look for dark, circular lesions with feathery edges on the top surface of the leaves and raised purple spots on young canes. Infected leaves will often yellow between spots

and eventually drop. The infection usually starts on the lower leaves and works its way up the plant. Blackspot is most severe under conditions of high relative humidity (>85%), warm temperatures (75 to 85 degrees F) and six or more hours of leaf wetness. Newly expanding leaves are most vulnerable to infection. The fungus can survive on fallen leaves or canes and is spread primarily by splashing water. Cultural practices are the first line of defense.

1. Don't plant susceptible roses unless you are willing to use fungicide sprays.
2. Keep irrigation water off the foliage. Drip irrigation works well with roses.
3. Plant roses in sunny areas with good air movement to limit the time the foliage is wet.
4. Remove diseased leaves that have fallen and prune out infected rose canes.

If needed, protect foliage with a regular spray program (10- to a 14-day schedule) of effective fungicides. Recommended fungicides include tebuconazole (Bayer Disease Control for Roses, Flowers and Shrubs), myclobutanil (Immunox, Immunox Plus), triticonazole (Ortho Rose & Flower Disease Control) and chlorothalonil (Broad Spectrum Fungicide, Garden Disease Control, others).