Know your Enemy
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When I started researching this I had the idea that it was important to recognize the enemy or garden pest, but soon discovered that there were so many bad guys out there it was far better to know which bugs were rose-friendly and to encourage them instead. So from now on everything that flies, crawls or creeps on, around or under your roses should be considered "THE ENEMY" unless you can identify it as a friendly critter. Friendly bugs are identified as those that are predaceous or predators using other bugs as their main source of protein enrichment. This list includes the following:

Praying Mantis, Lady Bug (not to be confused with the look-alike Mexican Bean Beetle), Spined Soldier Bug, Lace Wing, Honey Bee, AntLion, Ants (many carry some fungicidal diseases), AphidLions (larvae of the LaceWings), and the Parasitic Wasp.

Insects account for the pollination of 85% of our food supply! In addition to pollinators, insects also act as scavengers and the major food source for birds and fish.

Of the nearly 686,000 species identified world-wide, approximately 88,600 to 100,000 call the 48 contiguous states home. On any given day, under the right conditions, you might find several hundred in your own back yard. About 122 pests of that 100,000 can inhabit and infect your roses. Fortunately not all occur in the same geographic location, but they all do their best to make roses their main course. To give you an idea of what the rose grower is up against, of these 122 pests there are 8 kinds of Aphids, 2 kinds of Bees, 15 kinds of Beetles, 5 kinds of Borers, 3 kinds of Bugs, 11 kinds of Caterpillars, 6 kinds of Leafhoppers, 4 kinds of Leaf Rollers, 5 kinds of Mites, 2 kinds of Moths, 4 kinds of Sawfly, 25 kinds of Scale, 6 kinds of Thrips, 4 kinds of Weevils and 6 kinds of Worms. In addition there is a wide assortment of Chafer, Earwigs, Grasshoppers, Leafminers, Maggots, Mealybugs, Midges, Treehoppers, Walkingsticks, Whitefly, Slugs and Wasps.

About half of them are 'rose-specific' while the other half can wreck havoc on your roses just because they happen to be in the neighborhood when unprotected roses proclaim themselves available.

All this might tend to make the average rose grower want to throw in the towel, but to be honest, how many of us are going to come face to face with a Black & Red Crested Rose Aphid, an Asiatic Garden Beetle, a Rednecked Cane Borer, an Omnivorous Looper Caterpillar, Redbanded Leafhopper, an Omnivorous Leafroller, European Red Mite, a Bristly Roseslug Sawfly, Greedy Scale, a Western Flower Thrips, a Buffalo Treehopper, or an Imported Longhorned Weevil all in one afternoon in the garden and live to tell the awful tale.

Most of these pests find their way to your garden by means of wings, teeny, tiny feet or are brought into the garden in the form of eggs or larvae via contaminated plants, growing materials, soil or manure.
In some cases the young are hatched in the security of the bud which provides them with a protected food supply until they can move about and find their own food supply. While most insects are essentially loners, some pests act in concert with one another. The first insect may breech a plant's natural protective system while another lays its eggs in the damaged cane to provide a safe haven until the hatchlings are ready for the outside world. In still other instances the pest lives out its life cycle in the subterranean caverns where it methodically chews away at the vital root system of the plant. Some are 'day-bugs' while others prefer the cloak of darkness when they attack and plunder your roses.

It would be easy to say - 'Let's use one all-purpose spray that would get all the little nasties'. In principle I suppose that sounds good, but in actual practice we tried DDT back in 1939 and recently discovered that not only did we kill all the bad bugs, but we also eliminated the good guys as well. We were faced with the terrible consequences of our actions in the form of a serious disruption of the ecological chain and balance of nature to say nothing of the deadly, long-range residual build-up and pollution that reached in and affected nearly every aspect of our daily lives, and endangered all life on this planet as we know it. So without belaboring the all too familiar point of one animal's interdependence on another in the natural balance and order of things which has become fairly commonplace, let us move on to our own personal responsibility in the overall scheme of things.

First and foremost is the production, dissemination, acquisition and sale of healthy plants both foreign and domestic. The continued general good health begins when you set your plants into your landscape design in the best possible location and continue their care with the proper fertilization and hydration. Unhealthy plants have the ability to send out distress signals that lure insects in for the kill.

Second is the establishment of good 'housekeeping' techniques in the garden. Attention to details, institution and implementation of a workable daily routine of inspection to determine if your plants show any damage or infestation, and the correct disposition of any contaminated plant materials that may contain the eggs of an entire future generation just looking for an opportunity to hatch.

Third is the careful conscientious handling, proper application, combination and storage of pesticides by the gardener. It is important that the proper identification of an infestation is made before a proper specific pesticide can be selected. By reading the label carefully and asking questions of well-informed, educated, reliable professional sources when in doubt, the gardener ensures that he is acting in the best possible interest of the entire ecological chain of which he is an important and vital link.