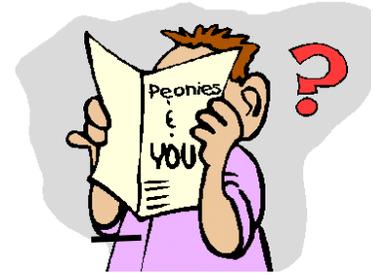


What's Wrong with My Peonies?



SYMPTOM	Small, circular, red or purple spots on upper leaf surfaces just before bloom. Later, spots appear on leaf undersides. Spots enlarge and join into irregular blotches that are glossy dark purple on the upper side of the leaf, chestnut brown underneath. This condition is sometimes called "red spot," "leaf blotch" or "measles."
CAUSE	A fungus: <i>Cladosporium paeoniae</i>
REMEDY	By the time you see the spots, it's too late to do anything about them this season. Spray with fungicide when leaf shoots are two to four inches tall and continue until flowers begin to open. In the fall, remove all old leaves to ground level and destroy. Also, consider replacing the plant with a disease-resistant variety.

SYMPTOM	Young shoots are covered with a dense, velvety gray mold. Flowers may look "blasted."
CAUSE	A fungus: <i>Botrytis paeoniae</i>
REMEDY	Inspection and sanitation are keys to controlling this disease. Remove infected flowers and leaves immediately. This fungus likes the cool, wet weather of spring, so if you choose to spray, that's when you do it. Use basic copper sulfate sprays, captan, chlorothalonil, copper or mancozeb. Be sure to spray all plant parts to thoroughly wet the foliage and soil.

SYMPTOM	Stems turn light tan and may be dry and stringy. The entire plant, or a portion of it, may wilt. Fluffy white mycelia appear under humid conditions.
CAUSE	A fungus: <i>Sclerotinia sclerotiorum</i> . Sometimes called "white mold."
REMEDY	<i>Sclerotinia</i> is a soil-inhabiting fungus that is nearly impossible to remove.

SYMPTOM	Flower buds remain small and turn black but no gray mold appears on them.
CAUSE	Unknown. May be related to potassium deficiency or late spring frosts.
REMEDY	Patience. Flowers may appear next year.

SYMPTOM	Some shoots wilt, yet the basal parts look perfectly sound. If you prune off the wilted shoot near the base and look at the cross section, you see that the water conducting system inside the stem has turned brown.
CAUSE	A fungus: <i>Verticillium albo-atrum</i>
REMEDY	This plant is a goner. <i>Verticillium</i> is a destructive fungus that is nearly impossible to kill because it lives in the soil. Infected plants must be removed and destroyed. This spot in your garden is now a dead zone for plants susceptible to this fungus.

SYMPTOM	Plants fail to flower and are small and weak. Roots are short and stubby. Fine roots show galls about one-eighth inch in diameter. When sliced, these reveal almost microscopic worms.	
CAUSE	Nematode: <i>Meloidogyne spp.</i>	
REMEDY	Plant only nematode-free roots. Immerse crown and roots in hot-water (115°F) for one-half hour. This can kill nematodes.	
SYMPTOM	Leaves and stems become dark brown or black, and somewhat leathery. Entire shoots may turn black and die. Symptoms may appear similar to <i>Botrytis paeoniae</i> but without the velvety growth. Cankers may appear along the stem.	
CAUSE	A fungus: <i>Phytophthora cactorum</i>	
REMEDY	Kiss this plant good-bye. While <i>Botrytis</i> seldom invades the crown, <i>Phytophthora</i> often does, causing a wet rot to develop and destroying the entire plant. Remove infected plants and the soil they're planted in. Plant healthy new plants in well-drained areas.	
SYMPTOM	Spots of varied color and size develop on the leaves.	
CAUSE	A fungus: <i>Septoria paeoniae</i>	
REMEDY	Remove plant debris in the fall. Chemical control is not usually necessary.	
SYMPTOM	Patterns of light and dark, sometimes in the shape of rings, appear on the leaves. Leaves may be stunted or curled.	
CAUSE	A virus	
REMEDY	No known treatment. If plants flower normally, enjoy them. If symptoms are severe and growth and flowering are greatly reduced, remove and discard the plant.	
SYMPTOM	Otherwise healthy plants fail to bloom.	
CAUSE	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The plant may be planted too deeply. The plant may not be planted deep enough. Too much mulch. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Too much shade or competition from tree or shrub roots. Late frosts.
REMEDY	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> When planting herbaceous peonies, the "eyes" should not be more than two inches below the soil surface. When planting tree peonies, the graft union should be at least four inches below the soil surface to encourage the plant to develop its own roots. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The two-inch rule applies to mulch. Except when newly planted, peonies do not need a great deal of mulch. Move peonies to a more hospitable location. If late freezes are a continuing problem, you may have more success with later flowering varieties.

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Works Cited

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- Rogers, Allan. (1995). *Peonies*. Portland, Oregon: Timber Press.
- Heartland Peony Society Web Site: www.peonies.org Searchable database of cultivars by color, bloom time, form, and flower type. Bloom sequence table. Interactive – lets you provide description of your peonies. Great photo gallery.
- American Peony Society Web Site: www.americanpeonysociety.org