

If your roses are turning brown, you could have a 'thrip' crisis

BY TOM DYSON
County Horticulture Agent

Air layering is a technique that can be used to propagate a number of plants such as tropical and subtropical trees and shrubs, the Gicus species, croton, Nonstea, philodendron, and even mature pines. It is best done on the stems of the previous season's growth.

Peat pellets that swell up to form both pot and growing medium for seedlings can be used for air layering, as can sphagnum moss, or loose peat. After a peat pellet has soaked and expanded to full size, slit it vertically on one side so it will fit over the plant's stem. Next, wound the plant stem by cutting two fine rings around the stem a half inch apart, just through the bark or skin, with a sharp knife. Peel off the area between the cuts. Next, slip

the pellet (or sphagnum or loose peat) over the stem. Cover the wound and pellet with a plastic bag tied at both ends to conserve moisture.

When roots appear in the bag, remove the plastic, sever the new plant and pot it up.

Lots of Ticks...

If you and your pets seem to be overrun with ticks from your property, you may need to take action.

You can apply Sevin WP (wettable powder) 50 at a rate of four tablespoons per three gallons of water in a spray, to all vegetation in the infested area.

Call the Chowan County Extension Office at 482-8431 for additional information on tick control if needed.

BAT-ter Up!

Bats can be an important weapon in a chemical-free arsenal for bug control. One big, brown bat can eat 3,000 to 7,000

Plants & PEOPLE

insects each night. You can attract bats to your yard by building and placing bat houses in your yard. To request plans, give us a call at 482-8431.

Nip Thrips... "In the Bud"

Roses that are suffering from brown patches ruining the blooms may seem to have a disease, but are actually infested with thrips. You can determine if thrips are present by holding an affected bloom over a piece of white paper and tapping the bloom. If you see a number of tiny, narrow-bodied insects moving about the paper, you have a thrip problem.

You can control thrips by making an application of dimethoate, or other products labeled for thrip control on roses. Check your local garden center for these products.

Make the Most Of Your "Thyme"

To get the most "punch" out of your herbs, try to time a harvest for just before blooming. For most herbs, this is the time that the highest level of oils is present in the plant, giving the maximum flavor and aroma when used.

Yard Yuck Alert

If you see grayish-bluish powdery "mold" on your grass in spots or areas, you probably are seeing slime molds.

These growths are fungi that are slimy in wet weather, but powdery masses of spores after a few days. These molds are relatively harmless to grass, although they can shade

out the sun from the blades if it gets too bad.

The fungi can be removed by brushing, washing or mowing the affected areas.

If the mold becomes a continuous, troubling eyesore, you may want to try some broad spectrum turf fungicides. However, the mechanical removal methods are normally adequate, cheap and easy.

Dilemma: Damping Off

A common problem in vegetable gardens is known as "damping off." You may have noticed it this year, as many seedlings and transplants have either not grown at all, or have begun to grow, only to become brown and mushy at the soil line, then wilted and died.

This condition is caused by soil-borne fungi, and is encouraged by cool, wet soil. Using treated seeds can be a help, as can planting after the cool con-

ditions have passed.

However, for the home gardener, the only answer may be replanting some years, or just not trying to go for the early crops. Since infection is so dependent on conditions, you can replant the same garden area without problems as long as you use treated seeds, and the conditions have improved.

Cantaloupes:

Whoa on the Water

Those of you growing cantaloupes can easily ruin the flavor of your produce by trying too hard.

Be sure NOT to be tempted to water the cantaloupes the week of harvest, unless you actually see wilting occurring. If you do observe wilting, then water just enough to help the vines out.

During this final week, you can actually "water down" their flavor by overwatering.

Column intended to provide way of 'sharing, caring, helping'

Welcome back to Marge's Mailbag and I hope all you dads and granddads had a wonderful Father's Day. Children's love is such a powerful present and I hope your children shared that gift with you.

The Mailbag's first column offered a bath-chair and shower attachment for a reader who might benefit by having the chair. Sure enough, I went to the Post Office Box and there was my first letter to the column. A reader had been found who was happy to "share the bath-chair" for a while. The bath-chair was delivered to a lovely lady wanting to know more about the Mailbag. She and her husband wanted to know if it were directed to medical needs only. I was happy to let them know that "anything goes" as long as it is in working condition, clean and neat. "If you would not want to receive it, then don't give it", has been my motto. People sharing, caring and helping others is what the column is all about.

A gentleman shared with me that he had read part of the column but not all of it. When I asked him "Why not?" he said that he wasn't into baking! I chuckled and said it was my best cake recipe and had to be shared. I realized then that the last column might have appeared to be directed to the homemaker but not so! This is a column in which all may participate. And with that I will tell you about a request I received from a gentleman.

"I have looked for years and cannot find an item called a Snake Match. When it was lit, it curled while it burned. These matches were popular around the 4th of July. Do you think someone might know where to find them today? I seem to remember that they came from around the Chicago area. Thanks for your help, Barbie."

Anyone out there in Readerland remember the Snake Matches? Are they to be found today and if so where? Write to Marge's Mailbag, PO Box 52, Edenton, NC 27932 and share with us where to find them.

Another reader (my husband) wants to know how to get rid of moles? There must be a family of at least ten thousand camped out in our backyard. It is an ankle breaking experience watering the flower beds with the excavation of hills and valleys made by these little creatures. We had them back in NH but never were they as much into construction/destruction as our newly acquired underground tenants.

I asked at a local lawn and garden shop if they might know of a cure for moles. I was told that they had tried everything to deter the little critters but to no avail. The best cure is "a cat" I was told. We haven't decide yet if our Mole Control method will be a cat and we hope that there might still be another method. Can you help with some ideas? Write to the Mailbag. I will share your ideas with our readers and we may try them and rate our success/failure in future columns.

Here are some helpful hints for readers:

Have you a problem with wasps, hornets, chipmunks, squirrels making your attic a home? Try moth balls! Yup, that's right, moth balls. Throw a box of moth balls up in the

Marge's MAILBAG



Marge Soper

attic space and watch them find a new home. You will notice for a day or two the odor of moth balls but that quickly dissipates as will the unwanted bugs and

stuff. A jar lid or a couple of marbles in the bottom half of a double-boiler will rattle when the water gets low and warn you to add more water before the pan scorches or burns.

To clear a sink or basin drain, pour 1 cup of baking soda followed by a cup of vinegar down the drain. Let the mixture foam, then run hot water.

Don't panic if you accidentally scorch the inside of your (or your wife's) favorite sauce pan. Just fill the pan halfway with water and add 1 cup baking soda. Boil awhile until the burned portions loosen and

float to the top.

Here are some kitchen hints:

- A slice of soft bread placed in the package of hardened brown sugar will soften it again in a couple of hours.
- You will shed less tears if you cut the root end off the onion last or if you place the onion/s in the freezer for four or five minutes before cutting.
- Meat loaf will not stick to

the bottom of the pan if you place a slice of bacon on the bottom of the pan before adding the meatloaf.

A few drops of lemon juice added to simmering rice will keep the grains separate.

The above hints are some of the ones shared by *Telegraph* (Nashua, NH) readers of Marge's Mailbag and some are from my years of experience

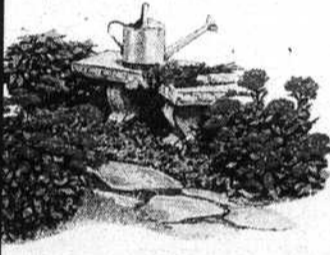
in burning the bottom of pans!

Do you have some helpful hints for readers? If so, jot them down and send them off the Marge's Mailbag. Are you looking for an "impossible" to find item or a part to something such as a bowl that fits a special mixer or a nut, screw or bolt for a mechanical item that

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