

COASTAL GARDENER
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Q: The fruit on my tomato plants has developed circular, gray-brown lesions. The lesion is slightly sunken and leathery in appearance. I have also removed a number of dead leaves from the plants. The leaves turned gray and dried up very quickly. What is the problem?

A: The fruit you submitted to my office indicates that your tomatoes are infected with late blight disease. Late blight is caused by a fungus, *Phytophthora infestans*. The spores of this fungus may have come to your yard in the fog, they may be present in your yard in the garden soil, or you may have bought them at the garden store and brought them home on the seedling tomatoes. Usually the leaf blight you described is the first evidence of disease presence. But leaf and fruit infection can occur at the same time.

To control late blight, keep the plants as dry as possible. Do not irrigate with a sprinkler. Use furrow irrigation or drip hose. Remove the dead and dying leaves and dispose of them in your green waste. Do not leave them on the ground under the tomato plants. Finally, spray your plants every seven to ten days with a copper fungicide, or maneb, or chlorothalonil. Use these fungicides as recommended on the package label for best results.

Q: The leaves on my roses are developing small windows and some holes. The damage is not severe, but it does damage the beauty of the roses. Can this problem be controlled?

A: A few weeks ago I talked about leaf cutter bees on roses and other plants. The damage you describe sounds like rose slugs feeding injury. A rose slug is actually an insect larvae. It looks a bit like a slug, but is the immature stage of a sawfly, which is a member of the bee family – so much for common names! When the eggs of the sawfly hatch, the tiny larva are too small to eat through the leaf, they can only manage eating a few cell layers deep into the leaf. This is why “windows” develop in the leaf. The larva leave the upper epidermis (usually) intact. As the insect grows, it can eat completely through the leaf and so holes are produced. Rose slugs are a common rose pest on the Central Coast during the

summer months. They can be controlled with most garden insecticides – carbaryl, malathion, diazinon, isotox, chlorpyrifos, insecticidal soap, and several of the synthetic pyrethroid materials. Read the package label and apply according to directions for best results. One added note – coverage of your rose bush with the spray material is important. Rose slugs feed on the underside of the leaf most of the time, so spray up from the bottom of the plant to get good underside of the leaf coverage for best control results. Usually one spray will keep the rose slugs at bay for a month or more.

Send your landscape and garden questions to: **The Coastal Gardener, 624-A West Foster Road, Santa Maria, CA 93455.**