

Wipe Out Black Spot with Tomato Leaf Tonic

When black spot attacks her roses, organic gardener and author Mary Perlmutter uses ingredients that are plentiful all summer long: tomato leaves and onions! Mary steeps the leaves and onion in alcohol. The sharp-smelling solution not only discourages the black spot fungus but aphids, asparagus beetles, and scale insects as well.

Ingredients and Supplies

- 10 tomato leaves
- 1 medium-size onion, finely chopped
- ½ cup rubbing alcohol
- Cotton batting
- Stick, about the size of a chopstick

Directions

1. Pick 10 tomato leaves from a healthy tomato plant and chop them into small pieces.
2. Combine the onion with the tomato leaves in the rubbing alcohol. Steep the mixture overnight.
3. Make a cotton swab by wrapping a piece of the cotton batting around the stick. The idea is to make a swab that is large enough to let you apply the mixture easily.
4. In the morning, remove any diseased leaves from your roses. Dip the swab in the tomato-onion solution and wipe the entire plant, including the tops and undersides of all the leaves.

Yield: About ½ cup of black spot-stopping Tomato Leaf Tonic

BEATING BLACK SPOT

Black spot (*Diplocarpon rosae*) is a disfiguring fungal disease that infects roses during warm, wet weather. The disease causes black spots ringed with yellow on rose leaves. While black spot is rarely fatal, a severely infected plant may drop all of its leaves.

Luckily, you can thwart black spot with good gardening practices. Every time you visit your garden, clean up fallen leaves and organic debris to remove places where black spot spores collect. While you're there, prune off and destroy infected leaves and seriously infected canes.

You can also keep black spot off plants by being careful not to splash spore-laden, muddy water on them when watering. A mulch of disease-fighting compost actually kills spores in the soil and keeps them from splashing onto plants.

Good air circulation also prevents black spot spores from taking hold. To open the center of rose bushes to air and sun, carry pruners on garden visits and cut out any inward-growing shoots. Growing roses in full sun and spacing them far enough apart for adequate air circulation can stop black spot troubles before they start. 🌹