

PEST PATROL

BUGS

Personally, as a chicken, I just eat any bug I find, but for the rest of you.....

Black vine weevils can be an issue. Watch for notches chewed in the edges of the leaves. This damage is done by the adult weevils. While it is disfiguring, it does not harm the plant. The real damage is done by the weevil larvae which feed on the roots, sometimes killing the plant. The insecticide, Orthene, offers some control. Consult your garden center or local Extension Service for more suggestions.

Occasionally caterpillars will chew the soft new growth that flushes out in the spring. Besides a few holes in the leaves, it is not a serious problem. However, green caterpillars, called Cabbage Loopers, appearing on deciduous Azaleas, are a concern. The Loopers will eat the new leaves and emerging flowers turning your Azalea quickly into bare twigs. Caterpillars are easy to control by using an organic treatment like Dipel or Diatomaceous Earth, or.....getting some chickens.

DISEASES

If you follow our planting recommendations, you are well on your way to a disease free plant. Prevention is the key.

Remember to:

- Purchase a healthy plant
- Plant carefully to insure good drainage
- Locate properly
- Mulch helps, so you do not need to irrigate as much
- Keep the soil pH 4.5 - 5.5

That being said, you may yet encounter a problem, so be aware of a few diseases and what you might do in such cases.

One potential disease, **Branch Die Back**, affects individual branches. To cure this fungus, remove all the dying branches using pruners dipped in bleach or alcohol. Clean between each cut, cutting well below the diseased portion. A preventive spraying of Subdue or Alliette will help.

Another disease, **Root Rot**, occurs when drainage is poor and is difficult to cure. The entire plant will suddenly wilt all at once. If you suspect root rot, remove the affected plant and spray the surrounding Rhododendrons with either Subdue or Alliette. Try improving drainage by replanting on a berm, limiting your watering, and correcting the pH (keep it between 4.5 - 5.5)

Some Deciduous Azaleas are susceptible to powdery mildew. Leaves become covered with a white or gray dust. We grow resistant varieties and encourage our customers to plant them in sunny locations with plenty of air circulation. If powdery mildew becomes a problem, you may want to spray with Safer's Garden Fungicide. Powdery mildew makes the plant unsightly, but is not fatal.