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## Midwest Cover Crops Council Decision Tool

One of the complexities associated with the implementation of a cover crop system is the myriad of choices available to producers - each with different strengths and weaknesses to achieve different goals under different field conditions. Selection can be a real challenge!

To aid in the decision making process, a diverse group of KSU Researchers, NRCS experts, and seed industry representatives spent that last year working on an interactive online tool designed to help you explore the different cover crop options for your intended use. Available at <http://www.mccc.msu.edu/selectorINTRO.html>, the tool can provide you with a vast amount of information – all from the information you put in to it! Options include planting and harvest dates, soil type, and drainage among others, as well as the option of choosing up to three goals for the cover crop. When all that information is assembled, the tool explores possible options with crop ratings. Further information is also available about individual cover crops, including seeding rates and depths, planting precautions, and much more.

If cover crops are an option you are giving consideration to, it's a great resource to begin to explore.

## Rose Diseases: Blackspot

If you've waited all winter for your rose to bloom with a show of color that will make the neighborhood envious, the last thing you want is for disease to steal that away! If you don't pay close attention to one of our more common fungal diseases, that could well be the case!

Blackspot is a fungal disease that results in defoliation of susceptible plants. The disease manifests itself with dark, circular lesions with feathery edges on the top surface of the leaves as well as raised purple spots on young canes. Infected leaves will often yellow between spots and eventually drop. You'll generally notice the infection first on lower leaves, with the disease becoming more noticed as it proceeds up the plant. High humidity and warm temperatures favor the disease, particularly when new leaves experience six or more hours of wetness.

Cultural practices to prevent the disease are your best bet. Start by planting resistant varieties. You can find a list of those at <http://www.ppd.purdue.edu/ppdl/weeklypics/3-22-04.html>. If you don't, or you already have a susceptible variety planted, give serious thought to fungicide applications. If you do need a fungicide, make sure you check product labels to be sure the product is labelled for both blackspot and roses. You will typically need to apply on a ten to 14 day schedule to keep the disease at bay.

To avoid the time that moisture is on the leaf surface, use drip irrigation or other methods that avoid overhead watering. You can help offset moisture issues by planting in a sunny area with good air movement.

Since the fungus can survive on fallen leaves or canes and is disseminated primarily by splashing water, be sure to remove diseased leaves that have fallen and prune out infected rose canes to minimize inoculum.

A good cultural program can really help you avoid problems. Combine it with a variety selection program that includes resistant varieties to give you the best shot at the blooms you desire!