



Huntington Park Rose Garden Affected by Virus

If you have recently visited the Huntington Park Rose Garden, you may have noticed some peculiar looking rose bushes—many with strange looking or few blooms. Unfortunately, the Garden has been impacted by a serious condition called Rose rosette Disease. This disease causes roses to grow strangely deformed stems, leaves, and flowers. The disease itself is a virus, but a very tiny mite called an eriophyid mite transfers the disease between plants. Eriophyid mites are so small that they can only be seen under strong magnification. The mites do not fly, but are so tiny that they are readily carried on the wind.

The disease spreads when the mites feed on an infected rose and then transferred to another rose by wind, or a person's clothing, tools, or pets. If roses are planted closely to one another, the mites simply walk from one plant to another. The mites then settle in to feed on the new rose and transmit the virus into the vascular system of that plant. The cycle then repeats.

The disease can be identified by the following symptoms:

- New growth is bright red and never turns green
- The stems are very thick and extremely thorny
- Flower buds present in tiny clusters called “rosettes” or “witches brooms”
- The flowers that open are stunted and deformed looking
- Foliage may be yellow and appear distorted

Although researchers are looking for ways to combat Rose Rosette Disease, sadly, there is currently no cure for the virus so we can anticipate continuing decline of the Garden.

To address this situation, we are working on a plan to completely renovate and reestablish the Garden—likely with a combination of new roses and other perennials/annuals. This will be a considerable undertaking, requiring removal of all of the existing plants along with the contaminated soil. While a date for the renovation hasn't been set, it's possible that the work could begin as early as spring, 2024.