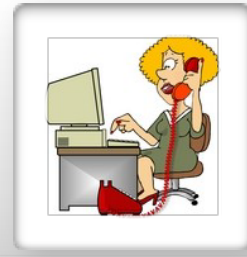


# From the VCE- Bedford Master Gardener HELP DESK



A monthly Bedford Area Master Gardener Association (BAMGA) newsletter column  
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The following are a few questions that have come into the VCE Office MG Help Desk in May within the past few years. Do the answers come immediately to you?

## QUESTIONS

1. A client walked in with samples of Rhododendron leaves with black spots on them and wanted to know the cause and a remedy.
2. A client called stating that slugs were eating her broccoli. She said she'd been hand-picking them off, but wanted to know if there was anything else she should be doing.
3. A client called stating he had raised beds and was planning on creating a few more. He wanted to know whether it was okay to use composted wood chips as the base layer.



Cercospora  
[extension.umass.edu](http://extension.umass.edu)

## ANSWERS

1. The black spots on the Rhododendron leaves were identified as being caused by one of several fungal diseases, most likely the *Cercospora* species. These fungi do most of their damage in wet or high humidity conditions. Cultural control includes removing dead leaves from the plant and fallen leaves from the ground. In addition, leaves should be kept dry while watering. During times of high humidity fungicide sprays should prevent serious leaf damage. For *Cercospora* leaf spot on rhododendron use propiconazole, thiophanate-methyl, chlorothalonil or mancozeb. Clients are advised to thoroughly read the product label and apply these fungicides according to directions on the label. [1] [2]



Toad  
[virginiazoo.org](http://virginiazoo.org)

2. Slugs are more active at night and prefer cool, moist, damp conditions. However they can be found during the daytime in cool shaded areas. Biological and cultural controls are preferred over chemical controls, especially around food products. Biological controls include encouraging natural predators such as toads, snakes, some ground beetles, wild birds, and ducks. Of all of these toads are the most important.

2. (cont.) Cultural controls include removing any plants (weeds) or material (large wood chip mulch or boards) that may provide shelter to slugs. If wood mulch is used make sure it is no more than three inches in depth; this provides weed and moisture control for the plants but is not favorable to slugs. Other cultural controls include using a dry, dusty, or scratchy barrier around plants, trapping, or hand picking slugs. Traps include inverting a melon, grapefruit peel, flower pot, or placing wooden boards, asphalt shingles, or damp newspapers. Traps should be checked and cleaned daily. If hand picking, place slugs in soapy water or rubbing alcohol to kill them. [3] [4]

3. The client was told that using composted wood chips as a base layer was acceptable, but that he should have a soil test done to make sure it is not “nutrient poor.” The client was sent literature on composting and soil preparation. [5] [6] [7] [8]

## REFERENCES

- [1] [http://www.clemson.edu/extension/hgic/pests/plant\\_pests/shrubs/hgic2050.html](http://www.clemson.edu/extension/hgic/pests/plant_pests/shrubs/hgic2050.html)
- [2] [http://pubs.ext.vt.edu/456/456-018/Section\\_4\\_Home\\_Ornamentals.pdf](http://pubs.ext.vt.edu/456/456-018/Section_4_Home_Ornamentals.pdf)
- [3] <http://www.extension.umn.edu/garden/insects/find/slugs/>
- [4] [http://pubs.ext.vt.edu/456/456-018/456-018-14\\_Home\\_grounds\\_and\\_animals.pdf](http://pubs.ext.vt.edu/456/456-018/456-018-14_Home_grounds_and_animals.pdf)
- [5] [http://pubs.ext.vt.edu/426/426-703/426-703\\_pdf.pdf](http://pubs.ext.vt.edu/426/426-703/426-703_pdf.pdf)
- [6] <http://pubs.ext.vt.edu/442/442-005/442-005.html>
- [7] <http://pubs.ext.vt.edu/426/426-708/426-708.html>
- [8] <http://pubs.ext.vt.edu/426/426-711/426-711.html>

\*all references accessed 4/24/2014

*Submitted by,  
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Help Desk Coordinator*

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Answers provided herein were based on specific situations and growing conditions.

These recommendations may or may not be appropriate for all circumstances.

For specific recommendations for your particular situation please contact your local Cooperative Extension Office.

**Bedford County Extension Office:** (540) 586-7675 / **Email:** Help Desk @ [BedfordMG@vt.edu](mailto:BedfordMG@vt.edu)

**Local Extension Websites:** [www.BedfordMasterGardeners.org](http://www.BedfordMasterGardeners.org) and <http://offices.ext.vt.edu/bedford/>

Bedford Area Extension Master Gardeners Association (BAMGA) is also on Facebook and Twitter

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