

# Winter Gardening Newsletter

by Linda Gilkeson

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## Garlic rust strikes.....and maybe some heat

What a lot of fungus amongus this year! We have had near perfect incubation conditions of temperature and humidity for incubating many plant disease fungi.

**Garlic rust/Allium rust** (*Puccinia allii*): Reported sporadically for the last three years in this area (that I know of), it is widespread this year. Leaves of garlic start with yellow speckles and spots that eventually show the bright orange spores typical of rust. Don't worry if the tips of your garlic leaves are turning yellow, that is normal for a maturing plant at this time of year. Note: Rusts are specific to their host plant--so don't worry that garlic rust will spread to your roses, beans, etc.--or vice versa.

The rust spores are spread on the wind, but if your garlic is infected, I suggest that you avoid visiting other people's gardens until your garlic harvest is done.

There is nothing to be done if your garlic is infected and it may reduce the size of the bulb a bit, but you should still have a reasonable crop. I suggest you line the trays or shelves you use to cure the garlic with paper. Then when the bulbs are dry and cleaned, you can roll up the dry leaves and debris in the paper and dispose of it (burn, bury deeply, dispose in garbage). Don't put infected leaves in the compost. Garlic rust doesn't appear to be spread on the cloves so you should be able to use the cloves for seed this fall.

This is a much less scary disease than it could be as the West coast strain of this rust seems not to infect other Alliums much (though I have had a few reports of leek infections). In Europe, the same fungus, but a different strain, is a serious problem on leeks and other Alliums. I would be crushed, I tell you, if my leeks become infected!

If we continue to have garlic rust infection, we may need to grow earlier varieties of garlic in future. This was the first year I grew Portuguese Red garlic and was surprised that it was ready to harvest the last week of June.

More info and pictures at: Oregon State University web site: <http://plant-disease.ippc.orst.edu/disease.cfm?RecordID=1328>

**Other Plant Diseases:** Powdery mildew, downy mildew, apple scab have been rampant in this weather. At this point, scab susceptible apples are badly infected, with scarred and cracked developing apples. You might as well thin those fruit out of the tree right now. Often the apples on the lower and interior parts of the tree are worst affected by scab, while apples at the top and outer parts of the tree, where there is much better air circulation, may be mostly fine.

**A bit of a heat wave** may (or may not!) materialize later this week: If temperatures do rise suddenly, plants won't be used to the heat and could be stressed or damaged. Watch new seed beds (you have all just sown your fall carrots, beets and other roots, right?) and small plants, particularly. Ensure they are watered and possibly shaded in the hottest part of the day. Until the carrots and other seeds come up, you can cover the beds with newspaper, burlap, etc. to keep the soil moist and cool. Roots of small plants, those with shallow roots and those growing in shallow soils will be most at risk from overheated soil and should be mulched well.

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