As deciduous plants in your garden head into winter dormancy, this is the time to take a close look at the appearance and performance of your fruit, berries and roses. Your trees, canes and bushes should look strong and healthy. Do they look lumpy, spotty, and sooty? Did they underperform? Did they get leaf curl? If the answer is 'yes' to any of these questions, then a winter maintenance programme is all that is needed to ensure that lumps, soot and poor performance do not happen again next year. This will also ease your work load in summer.

Here is an easy four-step programme to winter maintenance and spraying.

Step 1: In May, after you have harvested the last of your apples, pears, grapes and berries and have finished picking your roses it is time to start pruning.
On a still, dry day, with clean sharp tools, remove any dead, diseased wood/branches and remove all mummified fruit and the rosehips on rose plants.

Step 2: Use Yates Lime Sulphur spray, (mixed to the manufacturer's instructions) and spray the whole plant from top to bottom. Make sure that you can see the spray running into the crevices, cracks and crutches of the tree or bush. You can even spray a little on the soil around the bottom of the plant where leaves may have already dropped. Lime Sulphur spray is the most effective treatment to combat fungal diseases such as rust, brown rot, black spot, powdery and sooty mould, leaf curl and silver leaf. Sulphur also can force trees into dormancy by defoliation. So for those plants that show no sign of dropping leaves for winter dormancy, lime sulphur can kick-start the process. (I have found a need for this on the new dwarf peach and nectarine tree varieties and some roses.) This spray helps to control many over-wintering pests such as mites and insects and infiltrates their egg-laying sites. It also removes lichen and moss from deciduous plants.

Three to four weeks after you have completed your sulphur spray, your plants should be completely nude. Collect the fallen leaves and burn or destroy them; do not use these for leaf mulch because fungal spores transfer to the soil from fallen leaves and that re-infects plants via rainfall and water splash. Do not use sulphur sprays on apricots, evergreen plants or citrus, and never mix with any other sprays, never use on plants with new leaf growth, and don't use within three weeks of any other spray.

Step 3: After a minimum of three weeks, and now that your plants are completely nude, spray with Yates Liquid Copper and one week after that spray Yates Conqueror Oil or equivalent. For maximum effectiveness the copper and oil sprays should be applied separately. This will ensure that fungal disease does not enter the plant through pruning cuts.

Coat the plant so that you can see the spray running down the stems and into cracks and crevices, but always check the manufacturer's instructions to ensure your chosen oil is compatible with copper. Oil helps the copper stick to the plant, improving longevity of the copper spray along with providing a suffocating film to rid treated plants of scale, mealy bug and other over-wintering pests. This spray combination is excellent for all citrus trees so include them in your spray programme. Repeat this step within 10–21 days.

Step 4: Do any further pruning needed on a clear, sunny day, removing old canes from roses and brambles. Prune, thin and shape apple, pear and plum trees.

Now your winter spray programme is complete; it is that easy! Unless leaf curl (Taphrina deformans) has been a problem.

Notes

- Do not prune peach, apricot or nectarine trees in winter.
- Spraying your roses and the ground around your roses is essential to keeping them healthy.

Example of lichens

Preventing Leaf Curl

It Leaf curl is a fungal disease found mainly on peaches, nectarines, and other stone fruit in spring. Unfortunately it's too late to fix the problem by then. As with all good gardening practices prevention is the key. Leaf curl winters over on the plant, so to eradicate the disease you must spray at three critical times.

- When the plant is dormant during winter, i.e., it has no leaves, spray it with Yates Lime Sulphur or Yates Liquid Copper.
- Spray for the second time just before bud burst, i.e., when you see green swellings along the branches. Use Yates Liquid Copper.
- Apply the third spray after the petals fall leaving tiny fruit behind, again using Yates Liquid Copper

If like me you are meticulous about spraying when you are meant to but still have one or two trees that are infected with this disease then here is a useful tip. I was speaking to a work mate and discussing this problem, and she recommended I use Magic Mulch. This product is a combination of nature's two most beneficial growth aids – sphagnum moss and seaweed. I incorporated Magic Mulch into the soil around my two problem plants and they have thrived. (Yes, like a miracle they no longer have leaf curl.) You can go a step further and alternate with Ocean Solids or Trace Elements; in most cases this will alleviate leaf curl for the entire season.

Yates® Conqueror Spraying Oil is an organically certified mineral oil insect spray that works by coating pests with a suffocating film. Great for treating Scale, Mealy bug, Aphids and Mites.

Yates® Liquid Copper has a unique ultra-fine formulation to form a fungicide barrier during Winter spraying. It controls Leaf curl, Leaf spots, Blights, Downy mildew and Black spot.

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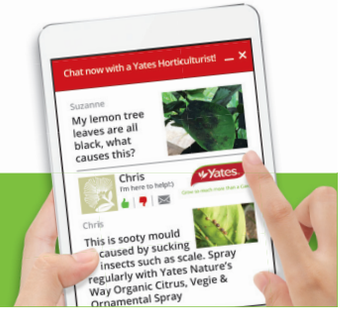

For more advice on protecting plants talk to Yates on 0800 693 297, or via Live Chat on yates.co.nz
Send your pics for quick problem solving!

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Winter Spraying