

Gladiolus & Thrips

Gladiolus and thrips are the HOT topic today. Thrips are pesky little insects that literally suck the juices out of gladiolus, causing them to brown and die. When this happens in other gardens, people often think that this death is the result of a mold or fungus, which of course is possible, but the main culprits across the country are thrips! And to make matters worse, their life cycle is greatly accelerated in warm, dry weather. This means that if you're experiencing a particularly warm summer you may have even more thrips eating the Glads!

The most important thing to note is that the thrip population can over-winter on the corms if they are not pre-treated and stored properly. It is said that in North America thrips cannot survive our winters, but in truth there are so many places that they can hide in the soil - like greenhouses, sheds and heated storage areas - that we cannot assume our gardens are free of them.

Thrips can destroy an entire crop of Gladiolus in your garden and you can barely see them. If you look really hard you may see tiny dark bugs down close to the soil where the foliage fans out. Their presence is really noticed in the foliage itself and only after it's too late to get rid of them. For this reason we're like to offer you some helpful methods to really cut down their chances of getting a foothold in your garden. It's also very important to note that insects spread most viral diseases, so by keeping them under control you are safeguarding against many problems that could arise.

Spring Treatment (Newly purchased and Over-wintered corms)

Winter is over, all danger of frost has passed and it's time to plant new and over-wintered Gladiolus into the garden. First, be sure to rotate your Gladiolus beds because fungi and viruses can be in the ground as well as thrips that have managed to make it through the winter. Remember: they can be anywhere - in the greenhouse, in the pots you have stored in warm areas around the house, in your yard or down the street. We may be sounding a bit paranoid but forewarned is forearmed!

Examine all new and old corms for any signs of decay or storage rot, being sure to remove the husks to look closely (this will not harm the corm). Destroy any corms that look badly damaged. When ready to plant you must soak all the corms, new and your own over-wintered ones, in a mixture of 1 tbsp of Lysol and 3 litres of water. Soak them for 1 to 3 hours and plant them while still wet. This will get rid of any that may have lingered on the corm and will help the corm be an unwelcome home for anything that has found it's way into your soil.

In Season Care & Protection

In order to maintain control of these pests you can spray the foliage with insecticide soap or organic foliage spray every week or more often if needed. Below is a recipe that works well.

Organic Foliage Spray : 1 tsp dish detergent, 1 cup vegetable oil, 1 litre of water, 1 cup rubbing alcohol

Shake vigorously to emulsify. Spray on foliage every week. During the season Gladiolus require ample water and a heavy soaking each week. This is vital once the plant has developed leaves and until flowering has finished.

Over-wintering Your Gladiolus

Gladiolus, like other many other spring planting bulbs are not winter hardy and must be dug and stored over the winter. Again, understand that thrips can over-winter on the corms so it is important to pre-treat them before storing. Our growers treat their Gladiolus corms before storing them and then ensure the temperature does not rise above 7 Celsius, which means the pest and larvae cannot survive.

You too can follow this same method by first soaking the corms in the same solution you used in the spring of 1 tbsp of Lysol and 3 litres of water for at least 3 hours before putting them away. Be sure to dry them before they go into storage. Dusting the dried corms with an all-purpose fungicide can also be helpful but soaking is far more effective for getting into those little folds where the dust might not reach.

Store them loosely in airy containers such as loose weaved baskets, mesh bags or old nylon stockings. Store them in well ventilated areas where the winter temperature will not rise above 7 Celsius to be sure that no thrips will survive.