

Roseslugs Have No Shame

Roseslugs can cause considerable aesthetic damage to roses. Despite the name, these creatures are not slugs at all, and despite their caterpillar-like appearance, they also are not caterpillars. Instead, **roseslugs are the larval stage of sawflies** (which actually are not flies, but wasps).



There are **three sawfly species** whose larvae are common pests on roses: roseslug, bristly roseslug, and curled rose sawfly. There is also a related species called pear sawfly or pearslug that attacks pear, cherry, cotoneaster, quince and other related plants.

This morning, I found a heavy infestation of bristly roseslug here in Lexington (pictured above).

When looking for sawfly infestations, look for **“window feeding”** or skeletonized leaves. Young larvae do not penetrate the leaf completely and leave a thin transparent layer (the upper epidermis), whereas older larvae chew through all leaf layers.

Depending on the species, larvae may feed on either the upper or under leaf surfaces, so be sure to turn over damaged leaves when looking for the culprits. Larvae can be fairly small or as large as 3/4 inch in length.

Bristly roseslug has multiple generations each year, and pear sawfly has two generations. The other two species each have only one generation per year.

Confused yet? If so, that’s ok. Just remember that if you chose to use an insecticide to manage these pests, **be sure to select a product that is effective against sawflies**. There are numerous products available for sawfly control, including insecticidal soaps, acephate, carbaryl, cyfluthrin, cyhalothrin, permethrin, and spinosad. *Bacillus thuringiensis* (Bt), which is used for caterpillars, does **not** work against roseslugs.

Left: Extensive damage from bristly roseslug feeding

Photo: Sarah J. Vanek, University of Kentucky



Young bristly roseslug larva on underside of damaged rose leaf

Photo: Missouri Botanical Garden

Always Read and Follow Label Directions for Safe Use of Any Pesticide!