

Roses

General Care

Established roses need regular care. The following suggestions are handy for roses that are performing well. If you have noticed that your roses are not performing as well as you think they should: consider a new site, amending the soil in the present bed or replacing individual plants. Information for starting new rose beds is widely available.

Valentine's Day is considered the best time for planting, pruning, feeding and re-mulching roses. In any case, late winter is always the best time of the year for working with roses.

Pruning

Heavier pruning is good for hybrid tea roses and floribundas. All dead canes should be removed and roses cut back at least half their length. Weaker stems should be cut back further. Deadheading should be done all season. Cutting the stem to the second or third leaf down best accomplishes this. Climbing roses are best pruned in the fall, but climbers that are greatly overgrown can be pruned as needed. Spring bloomers can be pruned after bloom time. Many people just remove dead canes and tips after blooming season.

Antique roses are usually left in more natural shapes and pruned less. Remove dead canes, irregular growth, and cut canes back about one-fourth or one-third to give a better shape. Climbers should not be pruned until after spring bloom.

Feeding

Feeding can be done by several methods:

Commercial (chemical) rose food. A well-balanced 6-10-4 or 8-8-8 mix can be applied every four to six weeks until about two months before the first frost. A heaping tablespoon per bush is sufficient.

Fertilizer and systemic insecticide. These commercial mixes work very well and can be applied as directed.

Organic methods vary. *Martha's Bloomers* supplies information and products that are very successful.

Foliar feeding during the growing season. This can be used in addition to granular foods. About every two weeks use a spray-on fertilizer such as *Miracle Grow*.

For any program, always remember the importance of several inches of mulch. Late winter is a good time to refresh or add more. Bark or pine needle mulch is always good and manure applied during winter is also very helpful.

Disease Control

Regular control of disease is most important in hybrid roses. Chemical control for insects is effective and available in a wide variety of products. The worst pest is black spot. This is a fungal disease controlled by a spray, available in both systemic and surface spray. Treatment is one of the most important aspects and may need to be applied about every two weeks during the growing season. Organic gardeners sometimes sprinkle cornmeal under roses and get good results. Neem oil is another method sometimes used.

Watering

Roses need deep watering once a week. Foliage is best kept dry if at all possible. Soaker hoses or drip irrigation is the best way - avoid letting a sprinkler system water your roses.

Good drainage, lots of sun and regular maintenance can make growing roses a joy. Perhaps one last hint is in order: Enjoy your roses as they grow, cut some and bring in the house and share some with a friend.

