



# Rose Gardening Tips

## Easy and Enjoyable Roses from Weeks

Caring for roses can be **easy and enjoyable** if you follow these three basic routines throughout the growing season:

1. **Regular watering.** At least 1" per week, that's approximately three gallons per plant.
2. **Regular fertilizing.** Feed your roses once a month, using a complete (e.g. 10-10-10) granular fertilizer. Feed twice a month if using a liquid feed.
3. **Regular disease control.** Spray your roses once a week to prevent fungus, mainly blackspot.

If you follow the above routines consistently, your roses will reward you with an abundance of beautiful blooms and many years of enjoyment.

### Getting started on your rose garden:

#### Planting

First, select the best location for your roses. Roses need a minimum of six hours of sunlight, preferably morning sun and afternoon shade. Good air circulation and good drainage are also important; roses will not tolerate "wet feet". When first starting a rose garden, have your soil tested for nutrition and pH. Hereafter, test your soil once a year in the spring. There are self-test soil kits, or many universities offer this service. Roses prefer a pH between 5.8 and 6.2. When planting a rose, prepare a hole at least 18 inches deep and 18 inches wide. Refill the hole around the rose with a soil mixture approximating 1/3 sand, 1/3 compost or composted manure, and 1/3 of soil dug from the hole; also add one cup each of lime, gypsum, and bone meal. Plant your bareroot rose bush by forming a cone of soil in the hole so that when the roots are set on the cone the bud union of the bush will be just above ground level. Hand pack soil around the bush and water deeply.

If planting a potted rose bush, carefully remove the container by first cutting out the bottom of the pot, then set the pot in the hole. Next, carefully cut the side of the pot and remove it. Fill in soil around the roots.

**Important note:** If planting a **bare root** rose (planted in container less than two weeks or not at all), there is one "law": **always keep the roots moist.** Soak your rose, canes, roots and all for up to two weeks. When ready to plant, prune away any broken canes or roots. Prune the roots 1/2" at the end. Prune your canes to balance the length of the roots. Plant as above. **The canes must also be kept moist.** Despite the moisture around the roots, the rose canes are still susceptible to drying out from the wind, as there are no root hairs to absorb water. To avoid drying the canes, cover them entirely with a mound of loose moist soil or mulch. Sprinkle the mound every two to three days with water. Once the new growth shoots are visible (2-3"), use a stream of water to wash the mulch away from the canes.

#### Fertilizing

Roses prefer regular feedings once a month. There are many fertilizers available at your garden center. You can use liquids such as Mills' Easy Feed® or Miracle-Gro®, generic granulars with such formulas as 10-10-10, slow release products like Osmocote®, or organics such as Mills' Magic® or Espoma's Rose-tone®. During the heat of the summer, it is a good idea to use liquid fertilizers to avoid burning your roots. Cease fertilizing after feeding in September so the plants can prepare for the winter. **Important note:** when planting bare root roses, **do not** use any fertilizer at planting time as this will burn the new roots. Start fertilizing when growth is 3-4" in length.

#### Disease Control

In the South, the major challenge is the fungal disease known as black spot. Check the pH of your water before mixing chemicals. Studies have shown that using the correct water pH will greatly extend the usefulness of the chemical you are spraying. The product Indicate 5® will help adjust your water to the right pH level. You should start spraying to prevent fungus outbreaks as soon as new foliage sprouts, and continue spraying through the fall. Chemical sprays require applications every 7 to 14 days, since your roses are constantly developing new leaves. To avoid chemical damage to your plants, make sure your roses have been watered the day before spraying and apply sprays early in the morning, before 10am. Some of the common chemicals that can be used are: Funginex® (Ortho), Immunox® (Spectracide), Triple-Action®, Systemic, (Fertilome®), and others. Some rose growers have had success controlling black spot with foliar sprays of Miracid™ at the regular foliar feeding rate. Others have reported using magnesium sulfate dissolved in water, sprayed on roses gives good control of fungal diseases. In cool, damp spring weather, powdery mildew can be a problem. This is easy to spot and many of the same chemicals for blackspot also work on mildew. **Always follow label directions and wear gloves and protective clothing.**

### Insect Control

We spray to *prevent* diseases; but we wait for the insects to arrive before spraying. Here is a short run-down on the major bugs and what to use: **Aphids**-Insecticidal soap, Sevin, Malathion; **Japanese Beetles**-Sevin (every 3 days), Milky Spore® (best long-term solution); **Thrips**-Orthene®, Cygon; **Mites**-Ortho Isotox®, Fertilome Triple-Action®. **Notes:** Once you have flowers, assume you have thrips. Japanese Beetles usually begin to appear late June through early August. Enjoy your spring blooms and then cut back your roses about mid June; your roses will be re-blooming in August and the beetles will be gone.

### Pruning

For best flower production, prune, or deadhead, your roses to enjoy them indoors or remove spent blooms. Cut you stems into thick wood and you'll enjoy larger flowers. Cut just above an outward facing five leaflet, angled away from the leaf, so water is directed away from the bud. In the fall, after the roses have stopped blooming, cut your plants back to about waist high. This is to prevent breakage from strong winter winds. Any freezing of cane tips will occur on wood that you will prune away in February. In February or March, prune back harder to 10-20" depending on the size of your plants. Coat your cut cane ends with outdoor carpenters wood glue or orange shellac. This will keep the cane borers from destroying you roses. At the same time, completely cut out any brown, diseased, or very thin canes, especially from the center of the plant.

### Rose Care...Month by Month

Whether you have one rose bush or one hundred, rose gardening is a wonderful hobby. Even though the roses may not be blooming, there is always something to do to keep your roses healthy and productive.

#### January

Anytime from mid-December through January you should apply a **dormant spray of Lime-Sulfur**. Spray the canes, the ground; coat everything in the garden. This smothers all the left over fungus spores from last season and will help get your plants off to a disease-free start. You can apply lime-sulfur again in two weeks if you had severe problems during the previous growing season.

#### February

**Prune** roses back to four to six strong canes, 12 to 24 inches long. Apply exterior carpenters glue to the cut ends of the canes. This prevents borers from getting in and destroying your roses. Also, clean up any old debris in the rose bed (leaves, sticks, weeds, etc.) You can begin regular watering.

#### March

**Begin fertilizing** when your bushes have a couple inches of new growth. They enjoy formulas heavy in potassium (K) and benefit from a helping of lime and magnesium sulfate (Epsom Salts). Watch for aphids during warm weather and **begin spraying for fungus** and new leaves appear.

#### April

Pull mulch down below the bud union after danger of freeze has past. Apply some new **mulch** if needed. Pine straw is a favorite mulch in the south; it is very effective in cooling the soil and controlling weeds.

#### April through October

Continue to follow your regular schedule of **water-feed-spray** for rose success. If bugs appear, apply insecticide as needed. Often a stiff blast from the hose will discourage aphids and mites (spray from underneath the foliage). Remove new or spent blooms to encourage more growth. Cut down into thick wood to promote larger blooms. Be sure to glue the ends of your cuts on the plant.

#### September

Stop fertilizing after this month to harden roses off for the winter months.

#### October-November

Apply lime to established beds. Begin preparing new beds by "double digging" (digging down about 18") and incorporating composted manure, etc.

#### December

Cut rose bushes back to about waist high. This will prevent wind damage during the winter. Late in the month, place mulch in a eight inch mound over the crowns for cold protection.

***"Of all flowers, methinks a rose is best" ...Wm. Shakespeare***

- **Ask for Weeks Roses at your local independent garden center.**
- **Please visit our web site at [www.weeksroses.com](http://www.weeksroses.com)**

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