

Care and Feeding of Your Roses



Roses may be the flowers of love, but there's nothing romantic about a bush that doesn't produce beautiful blooms. Don't worry. With a little tender loving care your roses will be as pretty as a picture.

Fertilize Regularly

The first feeding of your roses should be done when the bush first leafs out. For the remainder of the growing season, fertilize after each flush of blooms. Stop fertilizing about 2 months before the first frost. Use a commercial rose food or general-purpose fertilizer applied according to manufacturer instructions. Scratch dry fertilizers into the soil beneath the leaves - but not touching the canes or bud union - and water well.

Mulch Generously

Mulch helps minimize weeds, keeps the soil moist and loose, and adds essential nutrients. Organic mulch is best - try wood chips and shavings, shredded bark, pine needles, cottonseed or cocoa-bean hulls, chipped oak leaves or peat nuggets. Apply in the spring just as the soil warms and before weeds start to grow. (It can also be applied anytime during the growing season provided weeds are removed and soil surface is lightly cultivated.) Spread 2 to 4 inches over the rose bed, leaving some space open around the base of each rose. Replace mulch as it deteriorates during the year.

Water Adequately

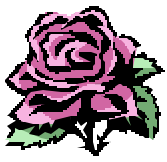
Seldom can you rely on rainfall to be an adequate source of water for roses. The actual frequency of watering will depend on your soil and climate as well as the age of the plant. Try watering a few mornings a week - water slowly, until the soil is thoroughly soaked 12 to 18 inches deep. Soaker hoses or a hose with a bubbler attachment will help keep water from splashing onto foliage, and possibly spreading diseases. Soil-level and drip-irrigation systems are also effective.

Prevent Pests and Diseases

Early detection and prevention keep these problems under control. Aphids are mainly a spring pest, and summer pests are thrips and spider mites.



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Thrips mainly attack rose blooms, especially whites and yellows, and mites attack foliage, turning leaves a mottled brown and leaving their tell-tale fine webbing. If detected early, these pests can be controlled with one or two sprays of an organic or chemical remedy. An initial control for both mites and aphids is a wash with a jet of water from the garden hose.

The "Big Three" of rose diseases are blackspot, powdery mildew and rust, all of which are types of fungus. Blackspot occurs during humid or rainy weather or where watering (especially overhead) is excessive. Powdery mildew prefers warm days and cool nights, crowded plantings or damp, shady areas. Rust develops on moist foliage, so areas with heavy dew or fog are prone to this disease. Proper rose culture, including plenty of sun, sufficient air circulation, proper watering and sanitation (disposing of old leaves and other debris) will minimize all three disease problems, but they may still occur. If detected early and treated with a fungicide (organic or chemical), none of these will spread out of control.

Whatever spray you use for pest or disease control, always be sure to follow the directions on the label! This applies to organics as well as chemical sprays. Even organics can be toxic if used incorrectly.

Prune to Promote Blooms

Pruning controls the size and shape of rose plants and for modern varieties, keeps them blooming repeatedly all summer long. Well-established hybrid teas, floribundas and grandifloras should be pruned early January to mid February.

Old-fashioned roses and climbers that bloom only once a year should be pruned immediately after flowering since they bloom on wood from the previous year's growth. Generous proper pruning creates bigger plants and eventually more flowers per plant. Selective pruning of top growth can produce bigger, but fewer, blooms. Don't be nervous about pruning - there is no evidence that anyone ever killed a plant with pruning shears!

To prune roses you'll need the following supplies: sharp curved-edge pruning shears; long-handled lopping shears; and leather gardening gloves. The diagram below shows the preferred angle to prune.

