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A SUSTAINABLE ROSE CARE CALENDAR

Our roses perform best when we give them regular care and attention. Here is your calendar for a year of sustainable rose care.

JANUARY

Prune your roses: Cut out dead and damaged canes. Remove the top 1/3 of the height on hybrid tea roses and about 1/4 of the height on floribundas and shrubs. Make your cuts one-quarter of an inch above an outward facing bud eye. Strip remaining leaves from the plant and dispose of all clippings, dead leaves and petals.

Plant your roses: Soak bare root roses in water for 24 hours before planting. Dig a hole large enough to accommodate the roots. Amend the soil with a good organic planting mix. Add 1/3 cup of super phosphate or 1 cup bone meal to the bottom of the hole. Water newly planted roses well.

Dormant Spray: If your roses had a lot of disease last year, dormant spray with a horticultural oil or copper fungicide spray immediately after pruning and before any bud eyes develop.

Water: If there is no rain, water your roses 2 times per week.

FEBRUARY

Amend the Soil: Improve the soil structure and add nutrients to your soil by lightly scratching an organic granular amendment into the soil around your roses. Top the granules with a layer of worm castings and compost.

Mulch: Cover the soil with 3 inches of organic mulch to improve the soil, prevent weed growth and conserve moisture.

Water: Ensure your irrigation is working well and water twice a week if there is no rain.

MARCH

Fertilize: When your roses put out a few inches of new growth, start to supplement last month's organic granular feeding with a well-balanced water-soluble, or a liquid fertilizer such as fish emulsion or seaweed extract (liquid feeding). Apply the liquid feeding every two weeks from March through to the end of June, and from the beginning of September through to mid-October. In July and August, feed at three to four week intervals. Make sure plants are watered before and after each feeding and be sure to dilute all fertilizers according to their label.

Finger prune and disbud: We want to encourage air circulation. Excess inward growth when caught early can be "finger pruned". For larger blooms on hybrid teas, you can leave the main bud and remove the side buds.

Pests: Aphids love new growth. Remove them by finger squishing or with blasts of water.

APRIL

Fertilizer: Continue applying liquid feeding every two weeks. On container roses, fertilizers should be mixed at half strength and watered in well.

Deadhead: Deadhead spent blooms. Leaf clusters come on three- and five-leaflet leaves. Make your cuts one-quarter inch above an outward facing bud eye at a five-leaflet leaf. The angle of the cut doesn't matter. On newly planted roses, don't cut too far down the stem.

Fungal Control: For powdery mildew, wet the leaves with a blast of water early in the day so the foliage has time to sun-dry. Cut out and remove rust and black spot as soon as you see it. Pick up dropped leaves. Cut out and remove blooms with botrytis.

Pest Control: Aphids are especially prevalent this month, blast them with jets of water or finger squish.

Water: Increase your irrigation run times. Ensure your roses are being watered deeply.

MAY

Fertilize: Continue liquid feeding every two to three weeks. You can alternate fertilizers.

Deadhead: Continue to deadhead for the maximum number of blooms and bloom cycles.

Insect Pests: Continue inspecting for insects. Lacey leaves are evidence of rose slugs. Find them on the underside of leaves and squish them or clip off leaves.

Fungal Disease: Cut out and remove leaves infected with rust and black spot, and blooms with botrytis. Wash off leaves affected with powdery mildew early in the day.

Water: Keep roses well watered and water deeply.

(Calendar, continued from page 4)

JUNE

Water: Keep roses well watered and add an extra day of irrigation and a longer irrigation run time if necessary.

Amend Soil: Add nutrients to your soil by pushing aside the mulch. Lightly scratch your second application of the organic granular amendment into the soil around your roses. Top the granules with a layer of worm castings and compost and reapply the mulch. Water in well.

Pest and Fungal Control: Pick up and dispose of all fallen leaves and petals to remove fungi spores and pests. Fig beetles love not only figs and apples, but also rose blooms. Catch them and drop them in a bucket of soapy water.

JULY

Water: Ensure your roses have adequate water as the weather heats up.

Fertilizer: You can slow down liquid feeding schedule this month and next month to every three to four weeks. Apply fertilizers at a weaker strength in hot months.

Deadheading: Avoid cutting long stems in summer months.

Fungal Control: Increase air circulation by removing dense inward growth. Wash foliage once or twice a week, allowing time to dry before nightfall.

Insect Pests: Keep watching for and removing beetles and other pests. This month look out for spider mites. You can identify their presence by webbing especially on the lower leaves. Dislodge them with forceful blasts of water to the underside of leaves. Learn what the beneficial insects and their larvae look like so you do not accidentally harm them. Visit <http://ipm.ucanr.edu/PMG/PESTNOTES/pn7466.html>.

AUGUST

Water: Inland areas may need an extra day of irrigation. Daily watering may be necessary in inland areas on container roses. Wash foliage when hot and dusty but always allow time to dry before nightfall

Deadhead: Continue to remove spent blooms but maintain maximum foliage by cutting shorter stems.

Pests: Cut out damaged leaves, buds and blooms. Pick up all dropped leaves and petals. Water wand forcefully on the underside of leaves every three days to get rid of spider mites.

SEPTEMBER

Fall Prune: Promote good fall bloom by deadheading further down the stem, cut out twiggy growth and minimize number of “dog-legs” on the stems. Clean up all the clippings.

Pests: Continue to check and water wand for spider mites. Inspect for aphids, caterpillars and grasshoppers. Squish/remove them from garden. Cut out damaged buds to disrupt life cycle.

Fungal Control: Remove rust and black spot infested leaves, and blooms with botrytis from the garden.

Water: Add extra water during Santa Ana conditions.

OCTOBER

Fertilizer: Last liquid feeding is at mid-month.

Fungal Control: same as last month.

Pests: Watch out for and remove pests. Pick up dropped leaves and petals.

Water: Add extra water if necessary during Santa Ana conditions.

NOVEMBER

Water: Reduce water to two times per week and shorten irrigation run time but don't allow plant to dry out.

Deadheading: You can stop deadheading if you choose and just pull off petals and allow rose hips to develop.

Fungal Control: Pick up all fallen leaves and petals. Clip off rust and black spot infected leaves, and blooms with botrytis.

DECEMBER

Evaluate: Decide which roses didn't perform to your expectations. Remove them, and add new planting mix and soil amendments to hole in preparation for planting new roses in January.

Research: Plan for and research replacement roses, choosing roses that are disease resistant and do well in our area.

Do all this and your roses will reward you with an abundance of blooms!