

Rose Care For November

Everyone's roses should have gotten a chance for a good recovery from summer stress. And now going into our show season, we will continue to have mild days and cool nights, just perfect for great bloom formation. For many varieties, the blooms are better in the Fall because the temperatures are getting lower as the bloom matures, allowing it to mature more slowly.

This is the month to enjoy the best blooms of the fall in our area. It is a time to be attentive to fall care to maximize these blooms, help them last through the holidays and be prepared for spring.

Watering: If you flood irrigate, you can probably get by with watering once a week now. If you use drip irrigation, water twice a week, three to four gallons each time. Pots still need water every third day.

Fertilizing: We still fertilize heavily the first 15 days of the month, then give a light shot around Thanksgiving to finish out the fertilizing season. This year we are fertilizing with fish emulsion at a rate of one tablespoon per gallon of water, with one gallon applied to large rose bushes and 1/2 gallon to miniatures. Fish emulsion will improve the size and color of the blooms. Our favorite kind is Safer brand, as it has less fish oil in it and so is less offensive. Since we exhibit, we first applied it on October 15th and 29th, and will again on November 6th or 7th, with a final 1/2 rate application approximately Nov. 26th. Alternatively, you can continue using water soluble (e.g., MiracleGro, Magnum Grow, or Grow More) or granular products (Organo or Bandini Rose Foods) and just fertilize in early November. Don't forget to water both before and after fertilization.

Spraying: With the warm days and cool nights, there is a good chance of mildew returning. Spray fungicide to prevent mildew. As for insect problems, we tend to spray the buds several times per week, especially to keep thrips under control. Use Orthene, Cygon 2E or Talstar. These can be mixed per label directions and applied with a hand sprayer, spritzing just the buds, which helps you to avoid hitting beneficial insects. A two gallon or larger pump sprayer is more efficient for larger gardens. Ours holds twelve gallons.

Planting: This is also an excellent month to plant potted roses, especially those on fortuniana rootstock. Our temperate climate allows the root systems to become established during the winter, giving them a substantial jump on the spring growing season. These are available at some local nurseries, most notably Berridge Nursery of Phoenix and some garden centers. There are a number of out-of-state nurseries who will ship potted roses as well. These include Muncy's, J & K Roses (Jim Mills), CoolRoses and Ashdown Roses. Some of the newer suppliers of roses budded on to 'Fortuniana' understock, including the first three mentioned above, have potted stock available now and should also be ordered now for January and early to mid February shipping. There is a wide selection of varieties, including floribundas and miniatures, climbers and antique roses, now available on 'fortuniana,' not just hybrid teas. All are shipped in one or two gallon pots. The printed list of bare root roses to be available in January from Berridge Nursery is usually available in November as well. Meanwhile, you could work on your new planting areas now before the holidays and before your next roses show up.

Winter chores: Didn't we just decide it was finally fall?? Winter, as others know it, hardly happens here, which gives us little down time for chores. It does come, however, with our "spring" pruning time occurring right in the middle of it! So get the jump on what we call "winter chores." These can include cleaning dead leaves and weeds out of beds, checking irrigation lines and reforming basins around bushes as needed. Continue deadheading and removing dead stems. This is also a great time to label your existing roses (yes, some of us think we would remember, but will forget!) and other garden plants.

Be sure to read our article on "Shovel Pruning" available on our website. Old garden roses can be pruned anytime after spring bloom, by the way, at which time it is usually too hot to do so. Take advantage of this great weather to cut back your OGRs to a size that works for the space in which they are planted. Doing so now will save a lot of time in January, when there is so much more to do.

And finally, don't forget to cut roses to take them inside for your own enjoyment and to share with others.