

Summer Rose Care:

THINGS TO DO IN JUNE, JULY AND AUGUST

Hot weather starts to hit our roses pretty hard in June, sometimes even earlier! It hits us as well, so advance preparation will allow for healthy, stress resistant plants, to keep the maintenance under control. Beds should be mulched with two to four inches of forest mulch or pine needles, which will keep the ground cooler, assist in moisture retention, and discourage weeds. Pine needles, as available from White Mountain Pine, are about 1/3 the cost of mulch, last much longer and upon breaking down help neutralize our alkaline soils.

IRRIGATION - If you flood irrigate, water deeply two to three times a week. If you drip irrigate, water 3 to 4 times per week, a minimum of 3 to 4 gallons each time. Water needs to be able to soak down 18" below the surface of the bed. Notice how long it takes for the wells around the roses to drain. If water sits for too long, you may need to add a soil sulfur product such as Dispersul, which helps open up the soil structure. Another aid in promoting water penetration is to water a second time in the same day once a month. This allows the water to move lower and wider, washing the salts in the soil further away from the root system. This helps prevent salt burn on the plant.

If you grow roses in pots, water seven times per week because of more rapid transpiration and lower capacity. Deep watering all areas at least once every two weeks will help push salts out of the root zones. It is also good to hose off your roses at least several times per week. This month get yourself a water wand, with an adjustable jet nozzle on the end. Spray the top and undersides of the leaves. This will increase the humidity around the bushes, clean off the leaves and knock off any lingering spider mites you might have. (If spider mites continue to be destructive, there are a number of good miticides on the market. These include Avid, Hexygon, and Floramite.)

FERTILIZING - Fertilize at half rate every six weeks during the summer. Use a good **ORGANIC** fertilizer like Hickman's Rose Food, along with alfalfa meal. Apply ½ cup Hickman's Rose Food and ½ cup alfalfa meal on June 1st, July 15th, and September 1st. Top dress fertilizer and lightly scratch into soil. Do not forget to water deeply both before and after fertilizing, very important steps to prevent fertilizer burn damage. Roses and other plants still need to be fed during the summer so that they will be healthy enough to start growing again when the weather becomes more hospitable. By reducing the amount of fertilizer, we do not risk stimulating excessive new growth which would burn even more easily.

DEADHEADING - It is important during this time to remove spent blooms on a regular basis. A number of rose growers experimented with leaving them on, but this resulted in the bushes becoming so dormant that they did not do as well in the fall. The roses will also think it is time to start making hips (seeds), causing energy to be spent there instead of in foliage production. We have, however, found that deadheading conservatively, cutting at a shorter distance down the cane and leaving as many leaves as possible, resulted in healthier plants for two reasons. First, more leaves were present to provide more protection of the canes from the sun. Second, there are more leaves providing nutrition to the plant. This is especially important if spider mites hit, causing the loss of leaves on the lower half of the bush.

Hang in there! When we hit August, we hope to start seeing the light at the end of the tunnel. When at least the nights start to cool off, our roses will enjoy the break.