

# *Rose Garden Care For April*

By Dona English, ARS Consulting Rosarian

April is both a busy and exciting month for a rosarian. We usually get our first major bloom cycle early in the month. This is the month that local rose shows are held in our area.

**Irrigation:** This is the month to start watering more heavily. If you flood irrigate, once per week is adequate early in the month. As temperatures go up, usually over 80 degrees during the day, you should be flooding your roses twice per week. On drip irrigation, water early in the month twice per week. By the end of the month or when temperatures are over 80 degrees, you should be drip irrigating three to four times per week, 3-4 gallons of water per irrigation. Two other factors to consider: extremely windy conditions will dry out your bushes more than normal, especially young bushes. If you see dropping blooms or foliage, some damage has already been done! If you have good drainage, you cannot over water! Water deeply every time.

**Fertilizing:** A simple program is to use a good granular fertilizer, such as Organo Super Rose Food. Use 1 cup per large bush and ½ cup per small bush early in the month and half that rate if roses are grown in pots. At mid-month, consider an application of a good quick release fertilizer like Miracle Grow or Magnum Grow, mix 1 Tablespoon fertilizer to 1 gallon of water. Apply 1 gallon of mix to large rose, ½ gallon to small roses and ½ the rate if grown in pots. For a more complete program, consider weekly fertilization early in the month with MiracleGro or Magnum Grow, then mid-month to the end of the month with fish emulsion. Mix 1 Tablespoon to 1 gallon water and apply 1 gallon of mix to large roses; ½ gallon to small roses, ½ rate for potted roses. Remember, when fertilizing, water before and after the fertilizer application.

**Diseases:** Continue to spray a good fungicide, such as Funginex or Immunox, every 7 to 14 days at the labeled rate, to prevent powdery mildew from taking hold. If you are able to hose off your bushes most mornings, you can also keep mildew under control. Of course, most of us cannot do this every day. If heavily mildewed, stronger products that give longer protection, such as Banner Maxx and Compass, are available at Rosemania.com.

**Insects:** As for insect pressures, aphid and thrips are usually very active this month. Spray at the labeled rate as needed. We do not recommend spraying pesticides or miticides preventively. Spray them only when you have a pest problem. Products like Orthene and Cygon 2E work great on most common pests like aphids and thrips. However, they also kill the beneficial insects that keep the spider mites under control. To avoid spraying the beneficials, especially on smaller gardens, you can use a small hand spray bottle 1-2 times per week and just spray the buds. For best protection against aphids, we recommend Merit. For thrips you cannot beat Conserve SC. Toward the end of the month, watch for spider mites on the underside of the lower leaves. To keep spider mites under control, use a hard stream of water from a water wand every 3 to 4 days, spraying the underside of the leaves. Alternatively, begin using a miticide such as Avid, Kelthane or Floramite as soon as mites are noticed. Plants can be stripped of leaves by spider mites in a very few days. Spray for spider mites when you first start to see evidence of them. Remember that Avid only kills the adults so you will need to repeat after three or four days to kill the newly hatched mites. Floramite will eliminate both the adult mites and the eggs so it is rare to have to repeat more often than 21 days.

We recommend the use of a "sticker-spreader" or surfactant product, such as Indicate 5, with all of the products mentioned above. Indicate 5 will enable the spray to more easily coat the entire upper and lower surfaces of the leaves, as it neutralizes the pH of the water.

Please DO NOT spray fungicides, pesticides, or miticides without proper protective gear and avoid doing so if there is any breeze. This includes a respirator, goggles and chemical resistant gloves at a minimum. You should also take proper precaution to cover your arms and legs with either long pants and long sleeve shirt, or with a chemical resistant suit such as Tyvek. The National Pesticide Telecommunications Network has a 24 hour, toll-free number to answer questions on the proper use or effects of pesticides. Keep this number handy. (800-858-7378)

You can find the MSDS and Label information online at <http://www.cdms.net/manuf/manuf.asp>.