

Getting Ready for Spring

Bill Kozemchak

Things to do now:

Get a tetanus shot if you are due! You should have one at least every ten years, but five is better. Tetanus is a soil born disease and we all work in the dirt.

Clean and sharpen pruners and loppers, and consider upgrading your tools.

Check ph and apply lime or sulfur to correct it.

Make a garden map. It doesn't have to be fancy, just a record of what rose is planted where. Garden markers can get lost or moved around

Check catalogs, websites, *Roses in Review*, the Penn-Jersey Easy Care winners list, the *Handbook for Selecting Roses from the ARS*, the Nov. issue of *American Rose*, *Horizon Roses*, talk to other rosarians or Consulting Rosarians in your area about what grows well for them.

Narrow down your list to the varieties you really want, can afford, and have space and time to care for.

Place your orders early for the best selection.

Pruning:

When the forsythia are blooming in your area, it's time to prune your roses. Cut out any diseased, damaged, or dead wood. For climbers prune the laterals, the stems coming off the main canes. Low prune 8-12 inches for long stems and large blooms. Pruning higher, 18-36 inches will produce more, but smaller blooms for nice garden color. Once blooming Old Garden Roses should be pruned after blooming. Some rosarians like to spray with their regular fungicide spray or a dormant spray when they are done pruning.

Planting:

Choose a good location with at least 5 hours of sun and no competition from trees or vigorous shrubs. You want an area that also drains well - roses don't like wet feet.

Dig a good size hole or whole bed. Amend soil with compost, peat moss, sand or clay, (limestone or sulfur depending on ph), and leaves or other organic material, no fertilizer, except bone meal or triple super phosphate in the bottom of the hole.

Mound soil 6- 12 inches above ground, and water new bushes several times a week while roots are getting established.

This is a good time to transplant roses that have out grown their spot, are struggling or were disappointing last year. A new spot may perk them up and make them perform better.

Watering:

Water, water, water, 1 inch per week (2-4 gal. per bush)

Overhead, drip irrigation, soaker hose, hand watering

Mulch heavily to conserve water and avoid dyed mulches that deplete nitrogen as they decompose.

Fertilizing:

You can use organic or chemical, liquid or granular, Epsom salts, alfalfa meal, fish emulsion, compost, alfalfa or compost tea.

Hose end sprayer or 5 gallon bucket will work.

Spraying:

To avoid fungal diseases such as black spot or mildew, you should spray regularly, or buy resistant varieties. For best results alternate types of sprays. Spray for insects when necessary. Spider mites show up when it gets hot and can be sprayed with water wand 3 days apart 3 times. To avoid midge problems the soil should be treated in late April or early May, and again in late June or early July. If you have problems with midge you might treat again in late August or early September. Bayer Advanced *All-In-One Rose & Flower Care* or *Complete Insect Killer For Soil & Turf* does a very good with midge.