

Rose Care for May

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Summer is on its way when May comes around. We have just enjoyed the best month of blooms in our area. It is still a time to be attentive to late spring care to maximize these blooms and to be prepared for our long summer.

Watering: Increase water as temperatures rise. It is important to water deeply and often to establish good root systems and to flush salts away from the roots. If you flood irrigate, increase to twice a week by the end of the month. If you use drip irrigation, water two-three times per week, 3 to 4 gallons each time. Pots need water every other day early in month, daily by the end of the month. Be sure you have good drainage!

Fertilizing: We still fertilize heavily the first fifteen days of the month, then give a light shot around month end. We have been using 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. Alternatively, you can continue using water soluble (e.g., MiracleGro, Magnum Grow or Grow More) or granular products (Organo or Bandini Rose Foods) and fertilize four weeks after last application. If not applying until the end of the month, cut to 1/2 strength. For planning ahead, the next fertilization will be about six weeks out. Don't forget to water both before and after fertilization!

Spraying: Spray fungicide if you have a mildew or blackspot problem, although this should be subsiding. As for insect problems, spray the buds several times per week to keep aphids, thrips and nitidulids (black cigar shaped beetles) under control. Use Orthene or for stronger control needs, try Cygon 2E. Both can be mixed per label directions and applied with a hand sprayer. A one to three gallon pump sprayer is more efficient for larger gardens.

Spider Mites: Yes, they're baa-aack! Start looking for the bronzed leaves that indicate you might have these destructive pests. They can defoliate a plant in a matter of days and will spread quickly. One alternative is to hose off the undersides of the leaves every 2-3 days with a water wand if they are present. Chemical control is advised for larger infestations, with applications of Avid or Kelthane as indicated on the bottle. Three applications will be important to reach the 2nd generation of mites, as it will only kill adults.

Hosing plants: It helps to hose off the bushes early in the morning to remove any dust or occasional pests on a weekly basis. Doing this more often during times of excessive heat, as often as 3-4 times per week, can be very beneficial in reducing heat stress. It will also help raise the humidity and lower air and soil temperatures.

Shade Cloth: If you use it, this is the time to put it up, before it gets too hot.

Deadheading: This chore is needed more often now as blooms age in the heat. Remove spent blooms down to about the first five-leaflet leaf, perhaps lower on a large well established bush. Do not cut stems down into the center of the bush, as we want to leave as many leaves as possible to protect and shade the canes from sunburn. If you do not deadhead, the plant will tend to become scraggly and think it is supposed to go dormant!

Even though our blooms will now be smaller, we can still enjoy them in the house throughout the summer months if we cut them tighter and early in the day!