

# PREPARING ROSES for FALL BLOOMS

In the Sonoran Desert

Mesa East Valley Rose Society

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It may still seem hot and like the dog days of summer but looking ahead, late August and early September is the time to take action and wake and bring roses out of the lethargy of the our hot Sonoran Desert June, July and August summer weather. Now is the time to set the stage and perform the caring tasks so they can respond to the nice cooler growing weather that has been scheduled for October and November. It is now that the horticultural steps must be taken for the best possible performance of roses. The goal is to encourage new growth, nice big blooms of Hybrid Teas, Grandifloras; beautiful sprays of Floribundas; and small beautifully delicate blooms of Miniatures.

Attention and action now and you will enjoy wonderful roses for the fall Rose Shows and plentiful roses all the way through the holidays.

**Preparing roses for a successful fall blooming season requires attention to each of the following items during the first half of September:**

- **Watering** Continued good watering practices are crucial now as the long hot summer is almost over, but it isn't yet. Until the hot temperatures are consistently lower, continue to provide adequate water, both in quantity and frequency. After it cools down both quantity and frequency can be adjusted accordingly. Keep the soil profile moist but not saturated. Allowing the soil to get too dry or too wet, may cause the death of a favorite rose.
- **Pruning** New blooms will come on new growth, which is what we want to encourage by good careful pruning. Fall pruning should be light and judicious. Cut dead blooms off and prune to  $\frac{1}{4}$  inch above a good active lateral bud on the stem. Pruning stimulates the growth of these buds. This bud will grow and more than likely will become a new beautiful rose. For Hybrid Teas and roses with larger canes prune at a point on the cane where it is about the same diameter of a pencil. Limit fall pruning to not more than  $\frac{1}{4}$  of the height of the bush. Remove dead canes, small twiggy growth and suckers growing from below the graft or bud union.
- **Fertilization** Will provide the nutrients in the soil and water necessary to bring good growth back to roses. Summer watering to compensate for heat leeches and reduces the availability of available nutrients in the rose root zone.

Rosarians from their own experiences develop preferences for inorganic and organic fertilizers. Based on their experiences they program the types of fertilizers, the quantity, and the frequency of application to get good results. Some of the favorite inorganic fertilizers are: “Arizona’s Best Rose Fertilizer”; “Arizona’s Best Citrus Fertilizer”; “Miracle Grow”; “Magnum Grow”; “Epsom Salts”. Some of the favorite organic fertilizers are: “Milorganite”; “Mills Magic”; “Growell”; “Alfalfa Meal”. Fertilizing is not just a one time and forget it item. People continuously need nutrition, so do plants. A good fertilization program provides for that frequency of adding nutrients to the soil. **Follow the application and frequency information on the label.**

**Watering, Pruning and Fertilizing** are all extremely important and necessary in the late summer for a successful fall blooming season. There are other less intensive but still important activities that are sure to enhance the growth, health and quality of the rose blooms for the fall months. Roses in the fall season are generally more disease free than the spring, but will still benefit from washing off the foliage and spraying the underside of the leaves to minimize spider mites and other insects. Continue to add and replenish compost which insulates and reduces fluctuations of soil temperatures, cuts back on soil moisture evaporation and adds nutrients for the benefits of the roses.

Now is the time to get started so you can be proud and enjoy the fruits of your labor during this fall season.

**Now is the time to take action for a successful fall blooming cycle in your rose garden.**

**November is just too late. By then the train will have left the station and the cows will be out of the corral.**

**Life is never long enough so be  
Happy and Grow Beautiful Roses!**