

April is an exciting time in the rose garden. We are already looking forward to the first bloom cycle of the season, probably in mid-May this year. March winds have been pretty strong and we have not had an abundance rain. Hopefully April will bring some "April showers." If you have not gotten all of your roses pruned, make that a top priority to complete that ASAP. Spring pruning is really important if you are going to have nice roses all summer long. Also, it is not too late to spray with liquid Lime Sulfur, but you will need to use the summer dosage rate.

Hopefully you are seeing some basal breaks on your roses. Basal breaks are the new growth that emerges from the bud union and are the key to having a strong and vibrant bush. We also keep a watchful eye out for any signs of dieback. If we spot any, we prune back to a lower eye that is healthy. It's also a good idea to occasionally walk through your rose garden looking for any growth that might have died. The last cold blast in mid-March damaged most of the new growth on our roses, which we have now removed. If you find any in your garden, promptly remove it. Also remove any dieback or dead canes, being sure to cut back to good wood with a nice white pith in the center of the cane. If you find any emerging new shoots that have died, you can simply pinch them out and new shoots will soon emerge.

April weather can be a little tricky as we can have sunny days with temperatures in the low eighties and we can also experience some cold snaps with temperatures down in the twenties. Once your roses have leafed out and are actively growing, keep an eye on the temperature. If it dips to 30 or below, you may want to try covering as much of your garden as possible. We use empty containers which we have saved over the years. Until we are certain that the temperature will stay above thirty, we keep our empty containers handy just in case we need to cover plants.

Roses in our area are susceptible to blackspot and occasionally mildew. It is much easier to prevent disease than it is to cure it. Therefore, if you haven't started your spray program, do so immediately. We recommend a routine spray program, either weekly or biweekly. The particular fungicides you use will help determine how often you will need to spray.

Speaking of fungicides, there are many options available. To help you choose an appropriate product, there is a Spray Formulations chart available elsewhere on this website. We highly recommend that you print a copy off and use to it accordingly.

Mid to late April is also when aphids usually show up in our rose garden. These tiny green insects will usually appear up near the tips of the stems on or near the buds. They are relatively easy to eradicate with an insecticide such as Malathion or Tempe. Perhaps the best option is to blast them off with a sharp spray of water. Be sure and do this early enough in the day for the foliage to dry before nightfall.

Roses are considered heavy feeders and they use a lot of energy to grow and produce that first bloom cycle. If they were properly fertilized last season, they should have sufficient energy to produce a nice first bloom cycle. However, they will need some food if they are to bloom and grow well for the entire summer. Once the soil warms up, we like to apply a good organic fertilizer which will feed the soil which in turn feeds the roses. There are many good organic products out there to choose from, such as RoseTone. We also like to supplement our organics with some chemical fertilizers, which are faster acting. Many rosarians use an extended release fertilizer that will hopefully provide nutrients for most of the growing season. Remember, when applying any granular fertilizer you will need to water it in.

April 15 is generally considered to be the "frost free" date for the tri-state area. So after the 15th, and assuming the weather forecast doesn't have another hard frost in it, you can safely begin to plant your potted roses in the garden. If you just got them from the nursery, be sure to gradually acclimate

them to the outdoors. We like to begin by putting ours under our deck where they will get some morning sun only. Over the course of a week or two, we gradually expose them to more sun until they are ready for the garden. Remember when planting your rose bush to keep the bud union on budded roses about 2 inches above soil level. Roses on their own roots can be planted even with the soil level. To remove the plants from the pots, place the pot in the hole you have prepared to make sure the height is correct. Next, take the pot with the plant still in it out of the hole and cut the bottom from the pot with a knife. Place the pot back in the hole, take your knife and cut up the entire side so you can remove the pot without damaging any of the white feeder roots. Backfill the hole and water well. Never use your foot to tamp the soil around the rose, as it will compact the soil.

To get more information, go to the [Ask the Experts](#) section of this web site and send us an email.