

This past July was a mixture of hot and dry weather followed by some wet weather with strong storms. August typically includes soaring temperatures and high humidity. Perhaps there is nothing more important than keeping your roses well hydrated. Rainfall in August can be sporadic at best, so it is really a good idea to have a rain gauge in your garden and monitor local rainfall. We recommend that your roses get 2 to 3 inches of water per week. If rainfall doesn't do the job, you will need to water your roses. In the really hot part of the day, your roses (and you) will love a nice cool shower. As always, just be sure that you water early enough in the day so that the foliage will have time to dry before night.

Hopefully you have been keeping blackspot out of your garden. However, due to the rain we experienced in July, it is very possible that many of you are seeing quite a bit of it in your garden. We spray weekly to try and prevent blackspot from becoming a problem in our garden, but when we have several days of extended rain, blackspot can be a problem. If blackspot is an issue in your garden, you are going to have to spray with a fungicide. There are a lot of products on the market for blackspot. To help you decide what products to use, take a look at the Spray Formulations charts on this website. They have all the information you will need to help you decide what products to use for your situation. If you currently have blackspot in your garden and are trying to eradicate it, we suggest you try using Dithane, Manzate, Maneb, or Mancozeb which are available at most garden centers. Try spraying it twice a week for three weeks or so and hopefully you will see less blackspot. It does take time to completely eradicate the disease so don't get discouraged and stick with your spray program. It is also a good idea to water your roses the day before you spray.

As we get closer to fall, you may begin to see yellow leaves on your bushes. Carefully look on the undersides of the yellow leaves for signs of spider mites. You may actually need a small magnifying glass to see them. If you do see them, a nice sharp spray of water to the undersides of the leaves will wash them right off. If you do not see any signs of spider mites, then more than likely it is a sign the leaves that have done their thing this summer and are simply dying and falling off. This is normal, especially on the lower parts of your bushes.

We have had a lot of Japanese Beetles this summer, but they are finally starting to subside. Hopefully they will soon be gone for the rest of the season.

This month is the last opportunity to granular feed your roses. Doing so will help provide the energy your plants need to produce those big beautiful fall blooms that we all dream about. Be sure and water before and after applying granular fertilizer. If you do not water, the nitrogen will suck up all the moisture in the soil, thus burning your plants. You can also provide a little extra boost by applying your favorite liquid fertilizer. We like to fertilize frequently at half the recommended strength. We feel this gives our roses more of a balanced diet than hitting them hard all at once. If possible, we feed with a liquid fertilizer every week, but at least every other week. You can continue liquid feeding right into September.

If some of your roses are not performing up to par, we suggest you check your pH. Roses like a slightly acid pH, in the 6.0 to 6.5 range (6.2 is generally considered ideal). Soil that is too acid will prevent the plant from being able to utilize the available nutrients. Thus, if your pH is low, which is not uncommon for our area, your fertilization program may not be working as expected. Getting your pH adjusted now will enable your plants to produce great fall blooms.

In anticipation of fall, many rosarians like to plan for a big fall bloom cycle. It is simply a matter of timing. Most of your roses will bloom about every 35 days or so. Look at a calendar and pick the date you would like to have your garden in full bloom. Count backwards about 35 days and do what we refer to as a major summer pruning. All this means is that we remove about a third of the bush including all of the blooms. Along with a good fertilization program, this will energize the bushes and they will reward you with a great fall bloom. If you are a little nervous about pruning all of your repeat blooming roses, why not pick some out and at least prune them. This way you can see for yourself how beautiful a fall bloom can be!

Remember - when taking care of your roses this month, be sure to take care of yourself too. Try to avoid working in the hottest part of the day. Also, take frequent breaks to cool off and be sure to drink plenty of water.