

July in the Rose Garden

Summer is definitely here! In our garden, the Japanese Beetles have made their annual appearance and they are really enjoying our blooms. These hungry pests are hard to figure out. They ravage some roses such as Touch of Class and Beverly while not bothering other varieties such as St. Patrick. They have a real passion for the fragrant blooms, especially the lighter colored ones. They will also attack many of your other flowering plants. There is really no good answer as to how to eliminate this pest. Cindy likes to take a stroll through our garden once or twice a day and simply knock the beetles off into a bucket of soapy water. If this does not appeal to you, another option is to spray an insecticide for them, such as Bayer Rose and Flower insecticide. However, be careful as you do not want to kill everything in the garden including the good bugs that eat the bad bugs. I can almost guarantee that if you spray Sevin throughout your garden, you will get a big dose of spider mites. One alternative is to simply spray the buds and blooms where the beetles do most of their damage. If you do decide to apply an insecticide, try doing so later in the day to avoid killing all of your honey bees.

So far, we have had scattered rain throughout the area, however, I promise it will eventually turn dry. Typically, some areas will get some rain while other areas get little to nothing. That is why we highly recommend you purchase a simple rain gauge to help you keep track of the rainfall in your garden. In the heat of summer, it is very important that your roses get at least 2 inches of water per week. When the temperatures are consistently in the nineties, your roses can use as much as 4 inches of rain a week. This sounds like a lot, but roses use lots of water when it is hot. Rather than applying a full 2 to 4 inches of water at one time, you'll get more for your money by applying water two or three times a week. Be sure and water early enough in the day to allow your foliage to dry before nightfall, as wet foliage at night provides the perfect environment for an outbreak of blackspot. When the weather is really hot, nothing feels better than a nice cool shower. The same is true for roses. They enjoy a nice cool shower in the heat of the day. We also like to use a strong spray to "wash" our foliage, making sure to hit the undersides of the foliage, which will help keep spider mites under control. We do this about once or twice a month and it has helped us to virtually eliminate spider mites in our garden.

We have heard that some rosarians recommend that you refrain from applying any fertilizer during hot weather, however we feel it is important to maintain a balanced fertilization program. As a general rule, we continue using various liquid fertilizers, however, we apply them at half the recommended dosage. We like to do this at least a couple of times a month. For a little summertime pick-me-up, incorporate some fish emulsion or liquid kelp with your favorite liquid fertilizer of choice. We actually prefer using the fish emulsion plus liquid seaweed. This will help your roses handle the stress from the hot July sun.

In early July, we will apply a round of organic fertilizers. Organic materials provide minerals bound in complex compounds that need to be broken down by soil microorganisms. Since the process is limited by microorganism activity, organic materials provide nutrients slowly. This slow rate of application will also not burn the fine feeder hair roots that are so important to the health of your roses. Organic

materials include pasteurized chicken litter, cottonseed meal, alfalfa meal, composted manure, fish meal, kelp meal, etc. There are also some excellent pre-packaged balanced organic fertilizers on the market such as Mills Mix, Rosetone and Plantone. Regardless of what organic material you use, be sure to lightly incorporate it into the soil and water well.

If you are growing roses in containers, you will no doubt have to water them more often than those grown in the ground. This frequent watering can leach your soil of valuable nutrients. To combat this issue, we fertilize the roses we have in containers more frequently, sometimes even weekly. We primarily use liquid products. We also like to top dress our potted roses with alfalfa meal pellets. Alfalfa is known to contain triacontanol, a growth stimulant. By putting it down as a top dressing on our potted roses, we feel we are giving our plants a little food every time we water.

Aside from the Japanese beetles, perhaps the biggest issue rosarians face in the summer is blackspot. Blackspot can be very tough to control and/or eradicate. If you get blackspot, we suggest you try using Manzate, Dithane or Mancozeb twice a week until you see it clear up. During periods of heavy rain, we add Dithane or Manzate to our weekly mix. Always remember to read the label of any pesticide you use and never apply chemicals at a higher than recommended dosage as it will probably result in burnt foliage. Also, when we experience short periods of extreme heat, we may delay spraying for up to two weeks. It is also a good idea to spray in the cooler times of the day.

Speaking of spray programs, we typically spray our roses weekly with a fungicide specifically designed to prevent blackspot. We make sure to rotate the mode of action (MOA) to prevent the disease from developing a resistance to the fungicide. While we realize that many rosarians do not like to spray, sometimes you will probably have to “just do it” to eradicate a disease or insect issue. While there are several good products on the market, sometimes it is hard to decide just exactly what you should be using. To help you select a product to use, check out the Spray Formulations charts found elsewhere on this web site. We suggest you print off a copy and take it with you when shopping for fungicides.

The July heat can also be tough on the rosarian, so be sure and protect yourself from the sun with a good sunscreen and proper clothing. When you're out in the garden providing your roses with lots of water, don't forget to provide yourself with some too!