

June

We finally got some much needed rain the last week or so of May. Now that June is here, we are also starting to have some sunny and warm weather. Hopefully, we will continue to get some rain as needed and we can break this awful drought.

May was so cool that botrytis absolutely ruined a lot of our first big bloom cycle. Botrytis usually occurs when the weather is cool at night. It attacks the blooms and turns the edges an ugly brown. There really isn't much you can do about botrytis other than remove the infected blooms. As the weather moderates and gets more consistently warmer, botrytis will pretty much go away on its own.

We also are seeing a fair amount of powdery mildew. Typically, we do not see this disease in the spring. However, this year has been different with very cool to even cold nights. Powdery mildew will crinkle the foliage, but not do any real lasting damage to the roses. The rain we got at the end of May washed a lot of it off, so hopefully we won't see much more of this disease until fall.

We have spent the last week of May removing spent blooms. Deadheading the spent blooms will encourage new growth and, more importantly, a lot more blooms. When removing spent blooms, we recommend cutting at a 45 degree angle about ¼" above the first leaflet (with at least four leaves) below the bloom. Also, as you remove spent blooms take a few minutes to look at the bush and remove all the twiggy growth that will do nothing but provide a good home for spider mites and disease. Be especially careful to remove all the spindly growth that is at or near the base of the plant. In addition, remove any canes that have died. Finally, try to open the center of the plant to promote good air circulation. This will help to minimize disease and insect infestations. This whole process will go a long way towards putting your bushes on the right path to a great rose season.

Usually this time of year, we see thrip appearing in the rose garden. To determine if you have thrip, you simply dig down into the bloom looking for tiny little light brown critters. Thrip feast on the bloom petals which turns them brown, especially on the edges. While there are several insecticides that will help control thrips, we recommend using a product that contains spinosad as its active ingredient. Spinosad will not kill all of the good predator bugs that are in your garden eating the bad bugs. Bonide markets a product named Captian Jack's Dead Bug Brew which has spinosad as its active ingredient. Ferti-Lome also markets a product named Spinosad. Of course, if you have a large garden you might want to check out Conserve SC, however it is pretty expensive. When applying any of these products be sure and focus your spray on the buds and blooms as that is where the thrips are. We also recommend that you not use a product with Spinosad too often as the thrip could build up a resistance to it. You can look for other insecticides that are labeled for thrip and alternate them. However, we recommend that you NEVER use Sevin in the garden, as it kills everything and you will probably end up with an outbreak of spider mites.

Typically June is the beginning of the hot and dry season in the tri-state area. When you do not get sufficient rainfall, it is very important that you provide water for your roses.

When the temperatures reach the high eighties, the roses will need 2 to 3 inches of water a week. There is nothing more important than keeping your roses well hydrated. You can simply use your fingers to poke in the soil around the roses to see if they need water. Make it a priority and your roses will reward you.

Our roses have used a lot of energy to produce that first bloom cycle and they are hungry! We also need to keep in mind that we will get most of our new basal breaks right after the first bloom cycle. Right after the May bloom cycle, we like to apply a granular fertilizer with a high amount of nitrogen to our roses. To keep the roses happy and give them a boost of energy, we like to give them a shot or two of a liquid fertilizer. There are plenty of good products on the market to choose from such as Mills Liquid Easy Feed, Peters 20-20-20 and Peters Super Bloom, so pick one and use it. We are also adding organics such as fish emulsion, liquid kelp, and seaweed extract to our liquid feeding program. You can also apply some organic fertilizers around mid to late June.

Spider mites will soon be making their presence known. The best way to keep spider mites under control is to spray the undersides of your rose foliage with a sharp and relatively forceful spray of water. Do this in the heat of day and it will not only eliminate the mites, it will also cool down your roses as well as you! If you have a lot of spider mites, use water every three days for three cycles and that should do the trick.

We are also starting to see our friends, the Japanese beetles in the garden. So far, we haven't seen too many, but we're pretty sure we'll start seeing more and more of them very soon. We like to stroll through our garden daily and shake them off into a container of soapy water where they will drown. Other options include spraying your plants with Bayer Rose and Flower Insect Killer every week. You can also use Sevin, however again we do not recommend using Sevin as it will kill your beneficial bug population. Japanese beetles seem to enjoy the more fragrant blooms the most; therefore, we leave these blooms on the bush a little longer, thus attracting the beetles where they are easily killed. This helps us to minimize the area of treatment. We have also recently heard that Demand CS will kill Japanese beetles, but based on university studies, is least toxic to beneficial insects. We plan to give it a try in our garden this year. Of course, if none of the above methods appeal to you, then you can always choose to do nothing and just learn to live with them until early August.

Rainy weather can also produce blackspot in the garden. It is best to spray preventatively rather than have to spray to eradicate blackspot. If you have blackspot in your garden, we recommend that you spray every three days with Manzate, Dithane or Mancozeb for a two week period. If you can't find these products, you can spray weekly with liquid Lime Sulfur at the summer rate for a few weeks. After a couple of applications, some rosarians who are still seeing outbreaks of blackspot, complain that their treatments aren't working. You must remember that blackspot spores can take up to 15 days to affect your foliage. Thus, it may take up to three weeks or so before you stop seeing new outbreaks of the disease.

Finally, the roses that last the longest are the ones you share with friends. Don't forget to take time to smell and enjoy your roses!

If you want to learn how to grow and enjoy roses, we recommend you consider attending one of our monthly meetings. We meet at Trinity Lutheran church in Hixson. More detailed information can be found elsewhere on the website. We always welcome visitors!