November

November is typically a transitional time for rosarians and their roses. Many rosarians figure the season is over and simply let the garden go. We strongly urge you to continue maintaining and enjoying your garden. The first couple of weeks of October were still pretty hot, however it did cool down the last couple of weeks. With the cooler weather, we have been enjoying some beautiful blooms. Even though November temperatures should be colder, we hope to continue to see some nice blooms with lots of rich color. Until we have sustained cold weather, the roses should continue blooming. With any luck, we might even have a few roses for the Thanksgiving table.

If you haven't already seen an increase in weeds, November will surely bring more weeds to the rose beds. If possible, take advantage of the nice days and spend a little time and effort out in your garden doing a little weeding. If left unchecked, weeds will absolutely take over your garden. If you don't address them now you will have a major task waiting on you come next spring. Once you get your beds weeded, you might want to consider applying a pre-emergent, such as Preen in your rose beds. Another suggestion is to apply some mulch. If you do apply mulch, make sure you get it thick enough to keep the weed seeds from germinating. In our rose garden, we use pine bark min nuggets and keep it about 3 to 4 inches thick. Other good options are pine straw, pine mulch and pine nuggets. Wouldn't it be great to have essentially weed free beds next spring when you begin your annual pruning!

It continues to be very important that you maintain your spray program, primarily focusing on disease prevention. There is perhaps no more important thing you can do to prepare your roses for winter than keep black spot from getting into your rose garden. Black spot weakens the plants and make them more susceptible to winter damage. Powdery mildew loves warm days and cool nights. Contrary to popular belief, it really does not like rain, which tends to wash the spores away. Both of these diseases can be controlled with a regular and routine spray program using products found on our spray charts published elsewhere on this web site. As always, remember to read and follow the directions on the labels of any chemicals you are using. Make it a priority to keep your roses healthy so they can withstand anything that mother nature might have in store for them this winter.

There is still time to check your pH and make necessary adjustments. If some of your roses are not performing up to par, there is a good possibility that your pH is out of balance. Roses like a slightly acid pH, in the 6.0 to 6.5 range with 6.2 being ideal. Soil that is too acid will prevent the plant from being able to utilize all of 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 be ready when next spring arrives.

To keep your garden clean and neat, it is a good idea to either cut the spent blooms or remove the petals by simply pulling them off, leaving the hips to form. It's also a good idea to remove any rose leaves that may have fallen

Next month we'll talk about applying winter protection.

If you have not already done so, be sure and take stock of the roses in your garden. If you have some roses that you are planning to replace, go ahead and dig them up now. This gives you an opportunity to add any necessary soil amendments to the planting area so it will be ready for new roses when spring arrives.

Happy Thanksgiving and remember to cut a bouquet for the table!