

## “Growing and Caring for Roses”

Whether you grow hybrids, garden roses, climbers, or even just knockouts you have probably had questions at one time or another about caring for your roses. The rose is America's national flower and by far the most popular of garden plants. Today, there are more than 6,000 varieties, offering a wide range of forms, colors, and fragrances from spring until late fall. There are many different uses for roses as they can be used in the landscape as single specimen plants or in masses for an impressive color display. They may also be used as borders or hedges, on trellises, and in cut-flower beds. Each year new varieties, in a wide range of colors and forms, are introduced by plant breeders.



You can grow roses successfully with some thought and planning and a little regular care. First of all and most importantly you must select a planting site that receives a minimum of 6 hours of full sun daily. Roses are susceptible to many diseases and sunlight helps decrease those disease problems.

Plant roses in a well-prepared bed of garden soil mixed with organic matter (well-composted animal manure, peat moss, or decayed leaves). Roses perform best in clay soil that is slightly acidic (pH 5.5 to 6.5) and a soil test should be taken several weeks before planting to help determine fertilizer and liming needs of the rose bed. Poorly drained soils should be avoided, since roses will not survive "wet feet" conditions and plan to plant roses at least 2 feet apart. This will provide access to sunlight and more air circulation as the roses grow which will in turn decrease disease incidence.

Watering of roses should be done early in the morning and always avoid wetting the foliage as this will promote disease problems. Roses need lots of water (about an inch of water each week from rain or irrigation) and the more mulch you apply will help conserve soil moisture and suppress weeds. Remove flowers from the plant without damaging the remaining parts of the plant and prune the plants every year to keep them healthy and in good form. Weekly you should go out and inspect plants to prevent insect or disease damage and treat as needed.

### **Tips for Pruning**

Pruning roses improves the size, quality, and color of blooms. As soon as the danger of frost is over, you should get ready to prune. Select three to five vigorous, healthy canes to be left to produce flowers. The amount of pruning varies with the variety of rose. However, the first pruning should remove dead, damaged, or weak growth.

Your pruning can also regulate the number of flowers produced. Leave longer canes if more flowers are desired. If large show-type blooms are desired, cut back to only a few canes and cut back the remaining canes to 12-14 inches above the ground.

Bush roses (grandifloras, hybrid teas, floribundas) should be pruned in early spring. Prune after the last frost has occurred or when buds begin to swell. As for climbing roses, many of these roses bloom in early spring and need pruning at the end of flowering. Any new canes that have developed should be left since these will produce flowers the next year. Cut all old canes back to the ground immediately after flowering. Some varieties of climbers will continue to bloom throughout the growing season. These varieties produce new canes from old canes rather than from the base of the plant. It is best to leave five or six strong healthy canes and to remove the older canes at the ground. Sometimes these remaining canes produce heavy branching. To control growth and encourage flowering, these lateral branches should be kept headed back. And always remove faded flower clusters to promote more flowers longer in the season.

### **Insect Problems**

Even though rose growing is a rewarding hobby, controlling pests is one of the requirements. Insects, mites, and diseases can quickly make a beautiful plant unsightly. The number and quality of blooms will also be greatly reduced if pest control is not practiced. As for the insects these are some that you will commonly face on your roses sometime throughout the growing season.

**Aphids**--In early spring aphids appear on the first buds, stems, and leaves. They leave behind a sticky substance we call "honeydew" which makes leaves sticky and shiny and provides a starting place for sooty mold. Begin treatment when aphids build up on plants early in the spring. Inspect plants regularly. Treat in the fall to reduce the number of aphids that may produce overwintering eggs. For control use products with the active ingredients such as: Malathion, Diazinon, dimethoate, or acephate.

**Caterpillars**--Corn earworms, armyworms, rose slugs, and other caterpillars may feed on blossoms, buds, and leaves. Treat when small caterpillars are present. For chemical control use products with the active ingredient -carbaryl (Sevin).

**Bud-, Blossom-, and Leaf-Feeding Beetles**--These may attack roses in various stages of development. For chemical control use products with the active ingredient -carbaryl (Sevin).

**Spider Mites**--These pests attack the undersides of leaves. Infested leaves develop a yellow flecking or stippling, turn brown, curl, and drop off. In severe infestations webbing is present. Spider mites are extremely small and can be examined closely only by the use of a microscope or hand lens. For Control use insecticidal soaps or insecticidal oils with a direct spray to the undersides of leaves.

## Rose Diseases

Because of the long growing season, high annual rainfall, heavy dews, and relatively mild winters in Alabama, roses are subjected to prolonged attacks by several plant diseases. Fortunately, control measures are available for most of these diseases. These are two diseases that commonly occur in Alabama that affect roses.

**Black Spot** which is probably the most damaging disease of roses in Alabama. Symptoms consist of circular black spots with jagged margins appearing on the leaves. Frequently, the spots are surrounded by a yellow halo. Infected leaves turn yellow and fall prematurely. When the attack is severe and allowed to continue, repeated defoliation will occur, resulting in a weakened plant. The fungal spores are spread primarily by splashing rain or water.



**Powdery Mildew** is a fungal disease that occurs in Alabama during the spring and fall. It is rarely a problem during the mid-summer months when black spot is at its worst. The presence of the powdery mildew fungus is confirmed by the white powdery masses of spores on young leaves, shoots, and buds. Symptoms consist of distorted foliage and stunted shoots.



**Control for (Black Spot and Powdery Mildew):** Good control of black spot and powdery mildew can be accomplished with season-long fungicide applications (with Active ingredients such as myclobutanil, propiconazole, tebuconazole, triforine, or thiophanate-methyl). Black spot can also be controlled by a fungicide with the active ingredient- Chlorothalonil). Important points to consider are regularity of spraying and thorough coverage. Fungicides act as a protective shield. Once infection occurs, however, they are of little value to already infected plant tissue.

Keep in mind when purchasing roses that they will vary considerably from one kind of rose to another in their reaction to black spot and powdery mildew as well as other diseases. If a low-maintenance rose bed is desired, choose a variety with multiple disease resistance.