

Rose Care Basics

Water - New and established roses require a minimum of one inch of water per week. Start good watering habits in the spring or right after you have planted your roses. The water should be applied at one time if possible. Apply the water to the base of the plant to avoid wetting the foliage, especially in the late afternoon or evening. This will discourage disease development. The exception to this is in the early spring before growth starts. The amount of water required will depend on the type of soil. Sandy soils will require more water than heavier soils and possibly more frequent watering. Very warm temperatures for extended time periods may also require more frequent watering. A good rule is to water less frequently but water deeply with a slow soaking application.

Mulch - Mulch will help retain moisture, maintain even soil temperatures, limit erosion and inhibit weed growth. Organic mulches such as wood chips and grass clippings will improve soil quality but bind up nitrogen so additional applications of nitrogen may be needed. As organic mulches decompose, they need to be reapplied. Avoid placing mulch directly in contact with the base of the plant. Good air circulation is needed to avoid disease problems. Mulch for winter protection.

Pruning - Reserve your main pruning for the spring. Pruning in late fall can lead to winter injury which can be severe. The main goal of pruning is to remove old and injured canes. This will help to open up an established plant to better air circulation and encourage new cane formation. A rule of thumb on established plants is up to one-third of the canes can be removed without hurting the plant. Pruning is also done to shape and improve the plant habit or size. This may mean cutting back some of the taller canes to maintain a uniform height and shape. Remember, removing weak and spindly growth will help divert energy to the stronger, more vigorous canes which helps ensure a better overall plant.

Fertilizing - Roses take a lot of nutrients from the soil. The best approach is to fertilize more often and lightly. For most rose varieties, start with an application of a balanced fertilizer in the early spring. Apply a second application at the end of the spring bloom period, sometime in May. A third application in late July will help the repeat flowering roses. Use about a half cup of 10-10-10 or similar chemical analysis fertilizer. Water thoroughly after fertilizing. Do not fertilize after August 1st since this encourages new growth and delays cold hardening. Organic fertilizers should be kept at least six inches from the canes.

Here are some websites that may provide additional help: www.ars.org or www.rose.org