

AUGUST MAINTENANCE

By Jimmy Moser

Fertilizing: It's time to start the process of making our fall blooms the "best of the year." Around the first of August, apply one to two cups of organic fertilizer plus three tablespoons of Epsom salts around the drip line of each bush and scratch into the soil. Organics can be cottonseed meal, blood meal, fish meal, milorganite or a combination of these. You may want to also include one cup of alfalfa pellets to each bush. Mills Magic is an excellent product containing a combination of organics — apply one cup per bush.

Also around the first of August apply one cup each of gypsum and lime to each bush to compensate for the acidifying that has taken place during the year.

Important: Please remember that my fertilizing recommendations are for rose bushes in the ground or in beds only. Do not use the same amount for roses in pots. In fact, I recommend using only water soluble fertilizers or slow-release Osmocote for potted plants.

Controlling Pests: The best solution I have found to get rid of **spider mites** is washing the undersides of the leaves with a strong stream of water, followed by spraying with Avid. Or you can spray with Floramite, which kills both the eggs and the adults.

This is also the time of year for two more pests to show up — cucumber beetles (the green looking ladybugs) and budworms. For **cucumber beetles**, I use Talstar, which can be purchased at Pro-Source One in Bartlett. Use one teaspoon per gallon. For **budworms**, two things will help. I use a bug zapper in my garden to kill the moths that lay the eggs on the rose buds at night. For the worms that hatch, I spray with Dipel, which I purchase at the Co-Op in Covington. Another approach that I used last year for moths and budworms was Conserve. It did a good job. It is organic and does not destroy the beneficial insects.

Timing Blooms for Fall Rose Shows: Around the middle of August is the time to start timing your blooms to cycle for the fall rose shows. You will need to cut your bushes back about one third. Stagger the cuts on your bushes two or three days apart, a few canes each day. Most varieties take around 38 to 45 days for a bloom cycle, depending on the number of petals. However, this is not an exact science. Weather conditions can cause a lot of variances in the bloom cycles.

My Rose Show Feeding Program:

- Four weeks before the show, mix two cups of 20-20-20 in a 32 gallon garbage can and apply one gallon per bush.
- Three weeks before the show, repeat same feeding.
- Two weeks before the show, mix two cups each of Bloombuster, fish emulsion and Epsom salts plus one cup of chelated iron in a 32 gallon can and apply one gallon per bush.
- One week before the show, repeat the same.

Watering: I must caution you to water, water, water. We are in the heat of summer and at least one inch of water is needed per week. Keep your bushes fed and watered well and you will produce some great bushes for fall blooms.