

JUNE MAINTENANCE

By: **Jimmy Moser, ARS Judge and Consulting Rosarian**

Deadhead: Our roses have completed their first bloom cycle and we need to deadhead. On new bushes, do not cut back severely. Go no further than the first or second five (5) leaf bract. On older bushes, leave at least two (2) five-leaf bracts to the stem.

Blind Shoots and Cleanup: This is also the time to cut out the blind shoots (growth that does not have a bloom developing at the end of the cane). Blind shoots can be 1/2 to several inches in length. Also clean out the middle of the bush by removing any extra leaves, spindly canes and debris that have accumulated. These extra leaves have done their work by producing food for the bush, but now they only serve as a nest for the spider mites.

Fertilize: Last month I suggested an application of 13-13-13 be used—one cup per big bush sprinkled around the drip line—or you could substitute a good rose food like Ferti-lome. Let's do that again this month and also add 3 TBS. Epsom salts per bush. This should help produce good basal breaks.

Spray: Remember your weekly spraying since this is the season for blackspot. I suggest the following on a continuing basis:

Week One: Funginex and Mancozeb

Week Two: Immunox

Week Three: Funginex and Mancozeb

Week Four: Immunox

Mulch: If you have not mulched your roses yet, now is the time. I mulch with horse manure, but you can use pine bark mulch. I do not recommend using hardwood mulch since it tends to form a barrier that prevents water from penetrating.

Spider Mites: There is an abundance of spider mites again this year. If your foliage is turning brown at the bottom of the bush, the undersides of leaves are dirty with little webs and some leaves are even falling off, you have spider mites. To get rid of them, use a strong stream of water on the underside of the leaves at three-day intervals to break the breeding cycle. Or you can use the chemical approach — you can use Avid, Floramite, Hexagon or Sandmite. ProSource One stocks Avid, Floramite and Sandmite and is located at 5387 Pleasant View Road in Bartlett, telephone 383-2524. Since these products come in large quantities and are expensive, several of you might want to go in together to make a purchase.

Cucumber Beetles: At a national convention a woman told us how she trapped little “green ladybugs” for use in her garden. Don't do that! Ladybugs are very beneficial as a predator insect in our gardens, but their color is not green speckled. The green speckled ones are the dreaded cucumber beetles that eat our rose petals. Several products will combat cucumber beetles: Talstar, Orthene, Malathion, Cygon 2-E, Merit and Conserve. These can be purchased at ProSource One, the Co-Op or a garden center.

Soil pH: If you are feeding your rose bushes and you cannot figure out why they are not growing, check the soil pH. When there is a low pH, it doesn't matter how much fertilizer you add, the nutrients are locked up in the soil and your plants cannot use them. The pH should be between 6.2 and 6.8 for optimum growth. You can get a one-day turnaround on testing from A&L Labs at 2790 Whitten, Memphis, TN 38133, telephone (901) 213-2400, website: www.allabs.com. If you have an e-mail address, they will return the results via computer. I can provide you with A&L soil sample bags and soil submittal forms.

Broadleaf Weed Killer: Beware of spraying your yard with a broadleaf weed killer or using a lawn service that uses this product, which contains 2-4-D. This product used in warm weather above 80 degrees forms a vapor that will drift onto your tender rose bushes. It will do almost as much damage as if it were sprayed directly on the bushes. Several of our rose gardens have experienced this problem.

Bronze Leaf: Some of our rosarians have noticed odd colored foliage, which they described as a reddish brown or bronze color. This is known as "bronzing" and is caused from spraying certain chemicals in hot weather. It is more prevalent when oil based chemicals are used. Do not be alarmed. **This is not a burn that will ruin the foliage, but only a discoloration.** No harm has been done to the leaves or the bushes. It can be compared to getting a suntan in the summer and should disappear as the weather cools later in the year. But do keep in mind that you run the risk of burning and ruining your foliage if you apply oil based chemicals when the temperature is above 80 degrees. Some of these oil based chemicals are Rose Defense, Daconil, Diazinon, Cygon 2-E, and Neem Oil.

Water, Water, Water: Don't forget to water. If you keep the roses wet during hot weather, you will get great growth. Don't be concerned when you have small blooms. During hot weather, the growth is so fast that blooms don't have time to develop. Grow a good bush this summer and in the fall it will produce great blooms.

Catch Voles With a Mouse Trap: We older rosarians can still learn something from our younger members. At last month's meeting, Tony Bernot told me about catching voles with a mouse trap. He said to bait one of the newer mouse traps with peanut butter, place the trap next to the hole in the ground, and cover the trap and hole with a black plastic pot. It works! I have caught four in that many days!