KPOV — *The Point*

Gardening: Get Good at It

“Caring for Roses”

Oct 8, 2019

Today we’ll be talking about basic rose care in Central Oregon. Let’s begin with what we should be doing with our roses at this time of year. If the nights have grown cold enough that your rose bush has stopped producing beautiful buds and the canes are tall, it’s time to do some trimming. Prune rose bushes waist high or about three feet, cutting straight across the bush. This is to keep the bush from rocking in the ground when the wind blows and breaking. At the same time, cut all the leaves off the bush and remove all the dead leaves on the ground. This will prevent leaves that would otherwise lay on the ground from passing on possible diseases. In other parts of Oregon, you may hear gardeners talking about adding lime to the soil. We don’t need to do that in Central Oregon. What you may want to do is to mound bark or mulch around the bush to about 8 or 10 inches high. Or you can purchase plastic rose collars which you wrap around the base of the plant and fill with mulch to protect your plant during the winter freeze.

Winter watering is very important for rose survival in the high desert. When the ground is not frozen and there’s no snow cover, water your roses every 4 to 6 weeks which will be two or three times throughout the entire winter. Besides mulching and watering, there’s not much to do for your roses over the winter.

However, in the spring as the weather begins to warm, say late April or early May, prune the bushes down to one foot or a foot and a half tall. Resist the urge to prune earlier because pruning stimulates growth. If we have a late freeze which happens in Central Oregon and you’ve pruned too early, the new growth will be damaged by the frost. Begin by removing all dead wood and small branches and stems that are thinner than a pencil width. This will improve airflow. It increases leaf drying and reduces plant humidity which also reduces the likelihood of disease. You should have three to six major stalks remaining. Clip those back uniformly to 12 to 18 inches above the ground.

Depending on the weather, but definitely during bud break, you can add your first fertilizer of the year. Use a general well-balanced fertilizer and apply it around the drip line of your bushes, not on the crown of the bush. Some gardeners add a 1/4 cup of Epsom salts or magnesium sulphate which helps intensify flower color and increases production of new flowering canes. You can fertilize every 4 to 6 weeks during the growing season, but stop fertilizing in late August or early September when the roses begin to go dormant.

Water your rose deeply early in the day, wetting the entire root ball. Allow the soil to just barely dry out between waterings. A general guideline for watering is to water approximately every 5 to 7 days. Of course, that changes as the temperatures rise in the summer and the afternoon winds pick up. In 90 degree temperatures, you may be watering as often as every day. Of course, mulching helps the soil retain water longer. On the other hand, be sure not to overwater and avoid overhead watering. Water remaining on the plants can increase susceptibility to plant disease.

We’ve only spoken about rose care in general today — not how to select and plant roses nor how to control diseases and aphids (the most common pest on roses). To find out more about those topics, check out the free OSU Extension publications on roses which can be found on our website.

For more information on this or other gardening topics, call the Master Gardeners at 541-548-6088 or check our website [www.gocomga.com](http://www.gocomga.com)

This has been Gardening: Get Good at It on KPOV — The Point.

Resources**:**

Roses: Planting and Care in Central Oregon by Amy Jo Detweiler; EC 1624 Published May 2008 and Reviewed October 2017

Controlling Diseases and Aphids on Your Roses by Molly Hoffer, Jay W. Pscheidt and Jack DeAngelis; EC 1520 Published August 2000 and Reviewed January 2016.