

Rosemania Recommends

Three Things to Do Now

By: Robbie Tucker

It is now time to consider what preparations we need to make for the coming winter months. Rosarians in warmer climates like Southern California and Florida will continue to enjoy roses throughout the months of December, January and February. The rest of us will need to invest the time to put our roses in order before Old Man Winter arrives.



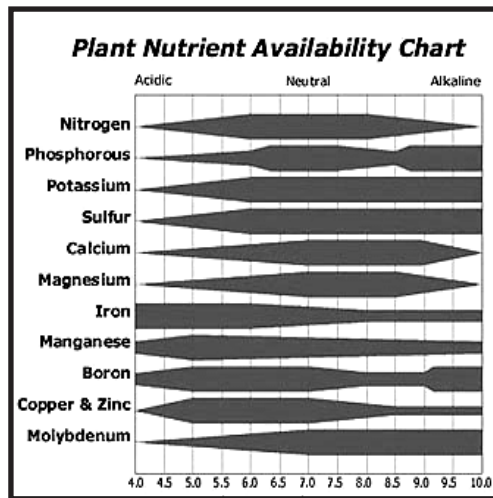
Be sure to stop fertilizing your plants approximately 30 days before your normal first freeze date. You want to allow your roses to stop the vigorous growth seen during the summer and fall so that stems can harden-off before freezing temperatures arrive. Young tender growth will not survive a hard freeze while the older canes will usually do just fine.

Everyone wants the best roses possible. I'm going to recommend three things you can do now to your roses to ensure they get off to a good start next year.

1. Check Your Soil pH

There is no better time to check the pH of your rose bed than now and I strongly recommend you do so. Roses need a soil pH of 6.0 to 6.5 for best performance. Outside this range, the important nutrients are not available to your plants. (See Plant Nutrient Availability Chart) Since altering pH is a slow process, winter is always the best time for proper correction and will get you off to a better start next spring. To collect a representative sample for analysis, simply push the mulch back

from an area around the drip line of your rose bush. If you have a bulb digger, use it to take a small core from the first six inches of soil. If you do not have this tool, a hand spade will work fine. Repeat this process at other locations in the bed. I usually take 10 samples and then mix them together in a five gallon plastic bucket. Take about a cup of the mixture and mail it to your local agriculture extension office for analysis.



An easier way to check your pH is with one of the great *Kelway pH meters*. Simply push back the mulch, stick the meter into the ground, wait three minutes, and take the reading. That's all there is to it! The *Soil pHD* is economical and a great choice for any gardner. For professionals, the *HB-2* is recommended. Both are guaranteed to be accurate to +/- .2 and



HB-2

Kelway pH Meters
HB-2 Professional - \$115.00
 Check your soil in 3 minutes.
pHD - \$61.00
 A low-cost alternative with the same accuracy as the HB-2.

will last for more than a decade with proper care. A great Christmas idea too.

2. Remove Salt from your Soil.

I continue to talk about the use of *Clearex* salt leaching solution and there is good reason for this: It really works! We have had hundreds of customers write and telephone to tell us how improved their roses are this year after using *Clearex*. Here is why. Your soil will naturally build-up salts from regular fertilizing. After time, your plants will start to falter. Rather than replacing your soil (which is back-breaking and expensive work), simply use

Clearex Salt Leaching Solution



\$19.99
Quart

\$37.99
Gallon

Clearex two to three times each year. I use 1 tablespoon in a gallon of water per bush for the first application. After that, I reduce the dosage to 1 teaspoon per gallon per bush. I strongly recommend using this product before you winterize your bushes. By removing your salt build-up and managing your soil pH, you will be off to a good start next year.

3. Get Your Soil Working With Mycorrhizae

What are mycorrhizae? The word "mycorrhizae" literally means "fungus-roots" and defines the close mutually beneficial relationship between specialized soil fungi (mycorrhizal fungi) and plant roots. The colonized root is called a mycorrhiza. Mycorrhizal fungi are the dominant microbes in undisturbed soils accounting for 60 percent to 80 percent of the microbial biomass. Mycorrhizae are fundamen-

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tal to plant establishment, supplying the water and nutrients needed for survival and, in exchange, receiving essential sugars and other compounds supplied by the plant. These mycorrhizal fungi increase the surface absorbing area of roots 10 to 1,000 times, thereby greatly improving the ability of the plants to use the soil resource. Estimates of amounts of mycorrhizal filaments present in soil associated with plants are astonishing. Several miles of fungal filaments can be present in less than a thimbleful of soil. Mycorrhizal fungi increase nutrient uptake not only by increasing the surface absorbing area of roots. They also release powerful chemicals into the soil that dissolve hard-to-capture nutrients, such as phosphorous, iron and other "tightly bound" soil nutrients. This extraction process is particularly important in plant nutrition and explains why nonmycorrhizal plants require high levels of fertility to maintain their health.

Benefits of mycorrhizae:

- Improved nutrient and water uptake*
- Improved root growth*
- Improved plant growth and yield*
- Reduced transplant shock*
- Reduced drought stress*

Up until now adding mycorrhizae to your soil involved either placement of a granular product at planting time or punching multiple holes around an established bush and mixing an injectable product with water to pour in those holes. We have been working with Dr. Mike Amatanthus of *Mycorrhizal Applications, Inc.* to come up with the easiest and most effective

way to treat your rose bushes and other bedding plants. **The answer:** *Plant Success* soluble mycorrhizae. Simply mix with water and pour around the rose bush. There are no holes to punch and no continuous mixing. A 4oz box makes enough product to treat 50 bushes!. I spoke at length to Dr. Mike when selecting the perfect mycorrhizae for our application. He told me it was very important to apply mycorrhizae at least annually to counter the longer-term effect of fungicide residue that seeps into the soil from our regular spray programs. So even if you used mycorrhizae in the past, it is a good idea to re-apply now. The pictures below show two newly planted bare root



Control

Planted with mycorrhizae

roses. The pot on the left is the control and the pot on the right contained mycorrhizae. The difference is remarkable even at an early stage of growth development.

Holiday Ideas

Bloomsaver

Designed for the flower gardener to facilitate the gathering and proper conditioning of flowers. This handy tool enables the gardener to collect dozens of roses at leisure, while protecting them from wilting, crushing and bruising. The Bloomsaver is a



handsome tool designed to give years of use. Easy to carry and extremely stable.

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West County Rose Gloves

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You have seen these advertised in the *American Rose*. We tested them and found them to be absolutely fantastic! Light weight makes them cooler to wear and great thorn protection. These are our favorite gloves. Available in various sizes. Even better, they are machine washable.



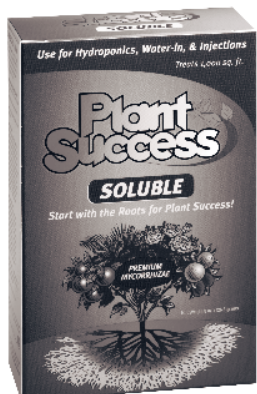
Bionic Garden Gloves are the first to earn the Ease-of-Use Commendation by the Arthritis Foundation.

\$39.95 (women's and men's sizes)

Rosemania carries more than 400 rose related products. Visit our website for a complete list with full descriptions.

www.rosemania.com

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Plant Success Soluble Mycorrhizae

4 ounces Only \$24.00!

Treats 50 plants