

Roses

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Roses are giving spectacular blooms this year. You might not know it, but Arizona is one of the rose-growing capitals of the country -- they grow really well here.

Now is not the time to start pruning roses, but there are a few things you can do to help your established plants or newly planted roses and make sure they continue to give you beautiful blooms.

Watering

Water deeply (about 2 to 3 feet deep) to leach away salts.

Water every four to seven days, depending on your type of soil.

Care

For vine or climbing roses, force blooms by bending canes horizontally and attaching to a tree, trellis or porch.

Don't prune until January or February.

To cut flowers: Cut just above a set of five leaves; cut at a 45-degree angle; seal cuts with lipstick or white glue. Immediately place cut roses into cool water. To keep flowers fresh, add 1 tablespoon of vinegar to the vase of water.

Fertilizing

Use only organic fertilizers.

Place a 4-inch layer of compost around the bush.

Every two weeks, add fish emulsion or liquid seaweed to the soil. Alternatively, you can make your own soil additive by combining 1 cup gypsum, 1 cup bone meal, 1 cup blood meal, 1/2 cup sulfur, 2 tablespoons chelated iron and 1 tablespoon epsom salts. If you make your own mixture, add 2-1/2 cups to established plants and 1 cup on new bushes.

Protecting

Roses have two main enemies -- aphids and powdery mildew. To keep these nasty little guys away, always plant garlic and onions next to your rose bushes. Additionally, aphids hate plants like Artemisia and Nasturtium.

What to do if you see aphids: hose off your plant, then spritz plant with a mixture of 1 tablespoon cooking oil, 1 gallon water and 2 tablespoons blue dishwashing liquid.

If you see powdery mildew, power wash your plant before 9 a.m., then let the sun dry the leaves. (Wetness promotes mildew.) Additionally, you can combine 1/3 cup baking soda, 12 ounces water and a squirt of blue dishwashing liquid and spritz your plant periodically. That should keep the little buggers away.