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## ROSES

### The Basics of Planting New Roses

Choose your roses carefully. There are many new varieties that are exceptionally disease resistant and completely hardy to Zone 5. Planting an easy-care rose is the first step to making rose care simpler.

Roses need full sun (6 hours of direct sunlight per day), rich soil containing at least 25% organic compost or well-rotted manure, and good air circulation. We pay a lot of attention to soil preparation to grow roses! When starting a new rose garden, or planting a new rose bush, amend the soil with **Coast of Maine Quoddy Blend Compost** or **Coast of Maine Cow Manure Compost**. We feed with a balanced, blended organic fertilizer (**Pro Gro** or **Sustane Flower and Vegetable Plant Food**), adding it to each planting hole. Take a soil test and, if the soil test indicates the need, be sure to add the mineral powders rock phosphate and greensand to provide a long-term source of phosphorus, potassium and trace nutrients. These mineral powders become a part of the soil structure and are released slowly over time through the work of the all-important soil microorganisms. This creates a sustainable, long-term healthy soil for the roses.

### Spring Care of Roses

Spring pruning of roses is one of the most important things that you can do. Start as soon as you see the buds start to swell so you can identify the live wood. Remove any dead wood. Remove branches heading into the center of the plant (open pruning) to increase air circulation. Especially look for some of the oldest, woodiest canes that may have a lot of dead twigs. You want to constantly be replacing old wood with new, more productive younger wood. Then, reduce the size of the plant according to your wishes. You can remove up to 1/4 to 1/3 of the height of shrub roses. With climbing roses, maintain the scaffolding structure that is attached to the fence or arbor. Choose the main canes that will remain, always looking for younger, potential replacement canes for future development of the plant. Remove the wild growth and tie the roses down. When making a cut on a rose cane, always look for an outward facing bud and cut just above it. The shoot that will grow from this bud will grow outward, away from the center of the plant, which is what you want to reduce fungus problems.

Each spring, when waking up the garden, we side dress each established rose with three shovels full of Our Magic Formula:

#### Our Magic Formula for Spring

Take a soil test and let the Natureworks staff help you interpret it organically. Add lime as needed to adjust your pH. Our basic feeding regimen is as follows: Fill a large wheelbarrow with compost (if you don't make your own, use three 1 cu. ft. bags of **Coast of Maine Quoddy Compost**.) Add 15 pounds of **Pro-Gro** organic fertilizer (a 5-3-4 blended organic fertilizer). If your soil test indicates that you are very low in phosphorus, add extra **rock phosphate**. If you are very low in potassium, add extra **greensand**. Mix this up well with your shovel. Add 3-4 shovels full to the base of each rose.

To help prevent fungus on roses, clean up all debris left over from the winter at the base of the rose before topdressing with the compost/fertilizer mixture. Spray the rose leaves with **Monterey Complete Disease Control** (an organic fungus preventative) weekly if fungus has been a major problem for you in the past.

## Mid-Summer Care of the Roses

“Ever blooming” roses are actually mislabeled. They are really repeat-bloomers that cycle in and out of flower. After the roses complete their first heavy flush of bloom, prune them back by at least 3-5 leaf nodes to an outside-facing 5-leaflet leaf. This encourages new growth to head *away* from the center of the plant. Don’t leave a stub; cut directly above a leaflet as that is where the next branch will arise. We call this open pruning. Use this opportunity not just to deadhead but also to shape the plant a second time in the growing season. Keep roses deadheaded throughout the season for maximum bloom. When deadheading, cut back to an outside facing leaf to encourage an even more open plant.

Roses definitely benefit from a midsummer feeding to encourage lush reblooming cycles:

### Our Magic Formula for Midsummer (July)

Put 3 1 cu. ft. bags of **Coast of Maine Quoddy Compost** in a wheelbarrow. Add 10 shovels full of **Pro Start** (a 2-3-3 blended organic fertilizer). Mix together until the fertilizer is evenly distributed. Add 3-4 shovels full of this mixture to the base of all repeat blooming roses. This side dressing is an added boost for the plants that are going to go the distance for you in the late summer and fall.

### Liquid Feeding

If you are growing your roses in containers, they will need more constant feeding as the daily watering in the summer will leach out the nutrients. Water your roses every two weeks with a solution of **Neptune’s Harvest Rose and Flower Food**. You should also add the Magic Formula right to the top of the soil in your containers in mid-July.

### Foliar Feeding

The hotter and more humid it gets, the more important it is to foliar feed your plants. I always say that if we’re uncomfortable, so are the plants! Foliar feeding literally means watering the leaves with a dilute spray of some type of organic solution. It’s a quick job and produces fabulous results. If the weather is very hot and humid, or rain is lacking, I use liquid seaweed. One packet of **Stress X Soluble Seaweed Extract** will provide you with a concentrated liquid seaweed that you can then dilute and spray on your plants. Liquid seaweed increases the plant’s resistance to stress and drought by increasing the amount of fine feeder roots.

How often do I foliar feed? I wish I could give you an exact formula. I use my instinct and I want you to learn to use yours. Monitor the weather and the conditions of your plants and keep in mind the basic guidelines above. We usually foliar feed every few weeks in a tough summer. You can’t make a mistake. Foliar feeding can only help.

## Fungus and Insect Control

Keep the area clean of diseased foliage on the ground. Good sanitation is the best prevention.

Provide good air circulation inside the plant by open pruning (described above).

To prevent fungus, spray with **Monterey Complete Disease Control** in the early spring. Spray the canes before the leaves emerge. Spray again in May, again in early June, and then spray once a week from late June onward as the weather heats up. If the weather is exceptionally wet, spray weekly in the spring. The goal is to *prevent* fungus spores from sprouting on the plants.

If black spot or powdery mildew appear on the plants, switch your spray to a fungicide that will kill living fungus spores. **Copper Fungicide** should be used to treat infection. You must water the plants well in the morning, and spray the plants in the evening, completely coating the leaves for the night. Never spray during a sunny day with this product as you can burn the leaves.

Many insects attack roses. The first are aphids, and they appear on new growth during warm spells following

lots of rain. For small numbers, simply hose them off with a strong stream of water. For severe infestations, release live ladybugs as they will eat the aphids. The rose sawfly appears in late May and does its damage in a 2-4 week period, just before the roses bloom. They can defoliate a plant in a matter of days. Monitor for them by checking the undersides of the leaves for little flat, green worms. Spray immediately with **Neem**. *Always spray after dusk after the pollinators have stopped flying.* When the sawflies disappear, the Japanese beetles arrive. Consider hand picking them in the early morning before they start flying. Sneak up on them and drop them into a bucket of water with some vegetable oil and dish soap in it.

If Japanese beetles are a real problem, consider controlling the grubs (the larval stage of the Japanese beetles). The grubs are in the soil during the spring and fall. There are two effective solutions. One is **Grub Gone**, a granular powder that is very safe and effective for organic gardening. The other is to apply **beneficial nematodes**. Always read the instructions carefully as these are both living, biological controls that are only effective if used correctly!

Rugosa roses can be damaged by sprays. Avoid spraying their leaves; test on a small, hidden section of the plant and wait for one day to see if there is any foliar damage if you feel spraying is needed.

Always remember that you should only target spray a plant that has an insect problem. NEVER blanket spray your entire garden. There are many beneficial insects that will devour or parasitize harmful insect pests. They too can be killed by an organic insecticide. Spray only as a last resort and spray only the infested plants. Encourage beneficial insect populations by providing plants that they need for nectar such as those in the Umbelliferae family (Queen Ann's lace, bronze fennel, dill, lovage, parsley gone to flower) and daisies of all sorts.

### **Winter Protection**

Don't cut roses back hard in the fall; wait until spring. Hill up the soil around the base of the plants 18-24" just before the ground freezes. A simple, efficient way is to simply dump a full 1 cu. ft. bag of **Coast of Maine Quoddy Compost** on the base of each rose bush. Then, in the spring, you pull down the hill and all you have to add is the organic fertilizer! If the winter is severe and the tops of the roses die back, the plant will still be alive under this hill when you remove it in the spring. (This is not necessary for Rugosa roses and their hybrids as they are very hardy.)

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