

**“God gave us memories so that we might have roses in December.”-
J.M. Barrie**



DECEMBER-IN OUR ROSE GARDEN:

If you get freezing weather, this will slow down your bushes (and this is good!) A longer winter rest period will make them just that much more vigorous come next spring. There are some things to do to prepare our roses for the upcoming winter.

- A) Watering-** (Supposedly with an "El Nino" winter, they predict we will receive better than average rainfall, an "El Nina" winter will provide less than average rainfall.) Remember that even though our bushes might not be growing vigorously above ground, their roots are growing and picking up all kinds of nourishment. So we need to provide moisture for the roots to absorb and store this spring energy. (If El Nino doesn't come through, please remember that our beloved S.A.W.S. is now determining your next year's sewer charge based on water usage between *Nov. 15th through Mar. 15th*. Water wisely!)
- B) Spraying-** It's important to keep our bushes disease free going into the winter. A November freeze and cold will help harden off our bushes, but you should continue some sort of spraying program using Triforine (1Tbsp.) or other organic sprays or dusting. Be sure and treat both the top and bottom of the foliage.
- C) Winter Conditioning-** Before you lay your winter mulch down, scatter gypsum liberally through your rose beds. Use about 2 cups sprinkled around each bush. This will help loosen up your soil and also provide for better soil aeration. Then lay down at least 2" of your favorite composting materials.
- D) A Winter Pest-** Yes, there is a winter pest in South Texas to look out for. If our weather turns out to be moist and cold as some winters that have come through (if you don't like Texas weather, wait 10 mins. it will change), spidermites will be held to a minimum. But if we have cycles of dry and warm weather, which South Texas is famous for, the devilish little spidermite will thrive. Check for the following: If you see some foliage at the bottom of the bush beginning to yellow, check the bottom side of the leaves for a fine white webbing with a salt & pepper looking effect. If left unchecked, the mite infestation will move up the bush

gradually. Either spray with Bayer Advanced 3-in-1, Bayer All-in-One, at a rate of 2tsp. per gallon of spray, or water wash the affected bush with a hard spray (bottom side of foliage) for nine days at three-day intervals.

- E) Culling Out and Transplanting-** Continue to dig up varieties that didn't perform for you, *but remember that your discards could be someone else's treasure!* You could start the new rose year off in January and February by bringing you "discards" to the meetings, and maybe they will find a home in a new garden. When digging up a bush this time of year you can dig a complete root ball and transfer it directly into its new home or bare root it. If you bare root your bush, there will be some bush shock. We prefer to do the bareroot method on a rose bush where we suspect it could have root gall. In some cases if the gall is not severe, the root containing the gall can be cut off (always disinfect pruners each time, after cutting questionable plant material) and the bush replanted. If the gall is widespread, it is better to discard the bush.
- F) Spray Materials-** If you have any spray materials left over from this season, it would be a good idea to store them in a place where the temperatures won't fluctuate too much. Most liquid spray materials don't carry over well from one season to another. Avid and Rubigan don't carry over well while we have been somewhat successful with Triforine. The best advice to follow is to buy fresh liquid sprays for the new growing season. Powder spray materials such as Maneb, Dithane, Vendex, Orthene, etc. will carry over well if stored properly and kept moisture free. Many of these powder spray materials can have a shelf life of 3 years or more.

-From "A YEAR IN THE ROSE GARDEN": by A.J. "Pop" Warner

1. Continue spraying with fungicide until the first hard frost. If blackspot is present, one of the Manebs added to Triforine will clear it up. Be sure to spray the canes, for that is where the disease over-winters.
2. If the mulch has worn thin, add to it. A heavy mulch helps maintain an even temperature and tends to prevent premature growth in mid-winter and spring.
3. Be prepared to pile some form of mulch high around tender varieties in the event that a hard cold snap occurs before the plants go dormant. Some varieties that require special attention are ELEGANT BEAUTY, COLOR MAGIC and TANNSINNROH (JOYFULNESS). Although we do not need to take the elaborate precautions some of our northern neighbors do, it is well to be aware that some varieties need at least minimal protection.
4. Complete the new bed you meant to start in August and should have done in Sept., Oct., or Nov. Don't do like some folks who buy bushes with only a vague idea where to put them.
5. Plant some seeds from rose hips. The odds of the resulting roses being real good are not great, but they are a whole lot better than winning a magazine sweepstakes. Plant them out of doors this month.

- 6.** Stick some Multiflora or DR. HUEY cuttings for budding next spring.
- 7.** Stick some HT and Mini cuttings. If they still have leaves, so much the better.
- 8.** Lift bushes that have sunk too low and are no longer thriving. Go around the bush with a spading fork and gently lift up, working soil under them. Stake to keep loosened bushes from being blown over, but do not prune. Many say it is a good idea to strip the leaves after this operation. Water well, once, then mist every day that it doesn't rain for next week or so. (See Jan. chapters)
- 9.** Bushes can be moved from now through January and February with the same precautions as in lifting.
- 10.** Give away good bushes, which you don't want for one reason or another. Your "dogs" may become someone's "pets".
- 11.** Divide Miniatures that have grown too thick and are no longer flourishing.
- 12.** Keep beds looking neat by pulling off faded petals of end-of-season roses. Some say leaving the hips promotes dormancy, but this writer has seen no indication that this is true.
- 13.** Keep weeds pulled. If we can keep the chickweed out now, there will be a lot less next spring.
- 14.** Continue to cut and use roses as long as they are pretty. We often have to peel petals on December roses, but they can still be nice. Most years we have an arrangement in the house at Christmas. No harm is done cutting roses from large, well-established bushes.
- 15.** If some bushes have grown overly tall and are in danger of being blown over, they can be topped somewhat and should be staked.
- 16.** High potash fertilizer is supposed to make bushes more winter hardy, but remember that is you have been using a "balanced" fertilizer, such as 10-10-10 or 13-13-13; there is already more than ample potash in the soil. More than enough of anything is usually too much.
- 17.** Now is a good time to check the pH and add lime (or for those of us in Bexar Co.; sulfur) if needed. Ground dolomite limestone (granular sulfur for us) is best because it acts slowly, lasts a long time, does not over alkalize the soil and adds magnesium. 4 to 10 lbs. per 100 sq.ft. of bed should take care of soil with pH 5 to 6. The coarser the grind, the longer it will last and a mixture of fine to coarse usually will take care of liming needs for years.
- 18.** Gypsum gives some benefit in helping wash out sodium salts and in providing sulfur. Since it leaches down through the bed at only about an inch a year, it is best used in preparing a new bed or reworking an old one. It has no effect whatsoever on the pH and will not take the place of liming.

19. Keep potted roses watered. Roses in beds probably will need no water from the hose until next spring. Contrary to what we sometimes read, moderate dryness in winter will do no harm, and may be good. Most of us can drain the watering system and roll up the hose. In fact, it is a good idea to drain any system now that could be damaged by an unexpected freeze.

20. Store the pesticides where they will not be frozen. Consider disposing of remnants that have been around a long time.

21. Put leftover fertilizers in plastic bags and tie tightly. Then you will not have to use a hammer to break them up next March.

22. After the last use, remove the spark plug and squirt some WD-40 in the cylinders of power equipment (put the spark plug back in).

23. Shorten the list of roses wanted to a "must have" list and order ones not readily available.

24. Carefully scan the show results. When we see certain varieties winning over and over, it tells us something exhibitors need to know.

* In updating our collection of useful tips, we have come across several comments, instructions and chemicals that are being replaced with newer techniques and materials. The tips have been updated accordingly.

Please note, most of the information shared on our monthly tip pages was obtained from Research-based sources (see contributors acknowledgements below), and from individuals who are considered very knowledgeable on a particular subject.

Many thanks to our contributors for sharing their wisdom so we can all learn and share with one another.

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