

Summer Rose Care

The spring flush of colorful roses is now past, but there are still repeat bloomers throughout the summer, especially in the shrub and groundcover categories. In fact, the hybridization of roses in today's times are producing more roses that will bloom off and on all summer. Deadheading, removing the spent roses, and a light fertilization is the key to keep them blooming. Maintaining healthy rose bushes throughout the summer will guarantee a beautiful display of flowers in the Fall when cooler temperatures arrive. Here are some tips to keep that happening.

Simply take a look at your roses:

- Do the leaves look healthy?
- Is the soil amended and mulched?
- Is your feeding and irrigation program adequate?
- Do you have an onslaught of summer pests?
- Is blackspot and powdery mildew taking over?

Healthy leaves are an indicator that the rose plant is healthy and healthy roses will help resist insect pests and disease. Are there leaf abnormalities such as browning, misshapen, etc.? if so, then you need to look for the cause which can be from many sources:

- Environmental problems
- Chemical toxicities
- Mineral deficiencies
- Fungal and viral pathogens

Pests will leave telltale signs such as holes in the leaves, webbing, and distortion.

Yellow or brown leaves is usually caused by overwatering or inadequate drainage, so check your soil for proper moisture level. On the opposite end of the spectrum, the leaves will wilt if there is not enough water, so be sure to tend to this right away. Always only water the roots as the foliage is extremely sensitive to overhead watering, which will lead to another common problem - fungal disease.

Growing the rose in a sunnier location, spacing it properly, pruning annually and maintaining a clean garden will help prevent this. Black spot, the biggest problem for roses, is yellowing leaves with black blotches on them. These affected leaves MUST be bagged and removed to the trash or black spot will be a continual problem. Another common fungal disease is powdery mildew which is a whitish powdery substance on the leaves and stems. A high-pressure water spray can be used if the spores are not already imbedded in the leaves. But do so only early in the day to prevent other problems.

Anthracnose is another issue. Symptoms are red, brown, or purple spots that darken with age and can be confused with blackspot. But it does not seem to affect the vigor of the plant. Cool, rainy/damp weather and overhead watering will encourage fungal infections so there may be a need to use fungicides to aid in prevention.

Viruses can include the Rose Mosaic Virus in which you will see a zigzag pattern and splotching of the leaves which looks similar to a mosaic. This is spread through propagation, not by insects. It will totally reduce the vigor of the plant.

Rose Rosette Disease: New shoots will be bright red and deformed. Leaves are obviously abnormal and very narrow with many, many prickles. There is currently no proven cure and it will eventually kill the rose. Since it is spread by a tiny mite, the plant must be removed or it will be a source of the virus which will spread to other roses.

Summer insects can be seen visually attacking the leaves, such as:

- If you see wrinkled new foliage or distorted leaves, look for aphids.
- Mites will cause stippled leaves and webs on the underside of the leaves. These two pests can be sprayed with a strong stream of water.
- Thrips will cause misshapen, distorted and bronzed foliage and are more difficult to control.
- Black sooty mold is an indication that you have sucking insects on the shrub and an antifungal spray is needed.
- Leaf chewing insects are obvious as you will see skeletonized leaves and holes in the leaves. Most are caused by beetles and a tiny caterpillar.
- Grasshoppers will defoliate the entire leaves.

Light pruning can be done throughout the summer, especially on the shrub roses. The exception is a climber which should only be pruned after it blooms in the spring. Hybrid tea roses should be cut back to the first stem with five leaves after blooming. Unhealthy or dead shoots can be pruned away anytime during the summer.

If it is a continually blooming rose, you may need to fertilize several times during the summer with a fertilizer formulated for roses or blooming shrubs. Always water the plant both before and after fertilizing. Continue to feed all your roses in August as this will ensure a beautiful flush of blooms in the Fall that will rival their Spring bloom. But avoid fertilizing any later as it will encourage new growth that could be killed by an early frost, thus providing an entry point for disease.

A healthy shrub with healthy leaves and beautiful blooms is the goal that you want to achieve.

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Resources: OSU Extension Fact Sheets

- [HLA-6403 \(Roses in Oklahoma\)](#)
- [EPP 7607 \(Diseases of Roses\)](#)
- [EPP-7329 \(Rose Rosette Disease\)](#)