

Date: February 14, 2018

NEWS RELEASE: FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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SUBJECT: Rose Rambling

By: Connie Holub, Waller County Master Gardener

February is the month of lovers, chocolates and roses. Well, I have a husband who I wouldn't trade and am very grateful for, chocolates I definitely don't need, so roses here I come!

Roses have been a passion of mine for a very long time, especially antique roses. They are a lot easier to care for and their fragrances are magnificent. I never could understand why anyone would want a rose that you couldn't walk up to and smell. So, since February is the month of the rose, let's get started.

The first step is to assess your roses, digging up and tossing those that are damaged or have one cane and moving those in the wrong spot due to less sunlight or more growth than anticipated. Remember roses need to have at least six to eight hours of sunlight a day.

Next, it would be a good idea to prepare your hole before you move or add a new rose by adding new fresh soil and expand shale. Then dig up your rose's root ball and trim off any dead or damaged roots. Measure the hole with the dug-up root ball to make sure the hole is not too big. Once planted, water in and continue to water the newly planted rose bush especially through the summer.

After watering the rose bush thoroughly, spread the fertilizer around the drip line which is the outer perimeter of the bush. Once again, water thoroughly.

Fertilization is important and comes in two kinds, organic and synthetic. Organics improve the soil and feed it whereas synthetics feed the rose bush and does not add anything to the soil. Examples of organic soil additives are alfalfa meal, bone meal, and fish fertilizer. These feed the micro-organisms in the soil, whereas synthetic fertilizers are man-made and come in liquid or granular form. Examples of synthetic fertilizers used by rosarians are Earth Essentials, Microlife Ultimate 8-4-6, Mills Magic Rose Mix, and Osmocote Plus.

Don't forget to mulch, but make sure the bed is clean from debris before doing so. Two to three inches will help to keep moisture in during the hot summer months, protect the roots during the winter, and in the end, it just looks good.

February 14, for rosarians, is the day known for pruning in this area. I know it's good for your roses, but I just hate whacking them. Modern roses such as hybrid teas, grandiflora and floribunda roses require a severe level of annual pruning. Own root roses need interior and crossing branches removed to promote good air circulation through the center of a rose bush. Shrub roses are not really pruned but maintained after reaching their third year.

Remove dead wood, crossing stems and old canes also. Antique and old garden roses such as Specie, Chinas, Polyantha, Noisette, and Teas (not hybrid teas) tolerate only minimal amount of pruning. To be safe only prune these old garden roses no more than one-third of their height. For the majority of the climbing roses, prune only after they bloom. Most grow on old wood, however if you know for sure they grow on new wood then prune in early spring.

Once you get through with your pruning, it would be a good idea to start a spraying program to combat black spot. Make sure you spray a fungicide on the canes, around the bush and the mulch. This will help with your black spot problem from last year. If you get all this done in February, you are definitely off to a good start. If you don't, there's always March.

If you have questions about gardening makes sure to call the Waller County Extension Office and ask to speak with a Master Gardener, we are always there to help with your needs. If you have any questions, please contact the AgriLife Extension Agent Stacie Villarreal at 979-826-7651.

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