

Winter from Barbara Horn

July is the preferred month for pruning roses, if your garden is in a frost-prone area, the later in July for pruning, the better.

Implements can be prepared now in readiness for pruning. Sharpened, clean secateurs, long-handled secateurs and a pruning saw are the usual tool requirements. Gloves – preferably which will give your arms protection are ideal.

Looking at the base of the rose bush – choose old, grey coloured basal shoots with short, non-productive wood coming from the main cane. Remove these stalks at ground level using a saw or long-handled secateurs.

This should leave a rose bush with between two to six green canes. Treat each cane separately by removing spindly, short or unhealthy laterals, cutting level with the main cane.

The remaining laterals, which are next seasons bloom-bearing canes, shorten back to wood the thickness of a pencil then with a slanting cut, cut above an out-growing eye. Should any leaves be remaining on your pruned bush cut them off near the leaf base so as a leaf stump is left to protect the new developing eye.

Plant hygiene is the most effective way to prevent disease. Clear away all rubbish, spent and diseased leaves particularly around other nearby plants.

Weed and scarify the surrounding soil and apply dolomite. The heavier the soil tilth is – the heavier application of dolomite is required. The general guide is 2 handfuls of dolomite applied in a metre radius around the base of a rose bush.

If fungal diseases have been prevalent, spray the rose bushes and surrounding ground with a strong solution of lime sulphur, the rate; 1 part lime sulphur to 10 parts water. As this is a strong solution this spray needs to be applied within 5 days of pruning.

White scale has been troublesome, I have found the Eco scale oils very conveniently packaged in trigger type spray-guns. Spray infected canes and, using an old toothbrush or washing-up brush, dislodge these white specks. Again, this needs to be done up to 5 days after pruning or damage to new growth buds will occur.

The rose beds can be mulched after pruning. I prefer not to feed roses with Shirley's No. 17 until mid-October.

LATE SUMMER from Barbara Horn

Rose bushes require a tidy up and replenished care to produce beautiful and bountiful roses during the cooler autumn months. This effort during February will reward a gardener with a delightful display in six weeks.

Remove spent blooms, cutting just above an outward growing, fully formed leaf or healthy eye. Stems which carry spent blooms need to be cut at the thickness of a drinking straw. Any dead or whippy short stems are better removed. I reason it is better to give healthy stems as much plant producing food as possible.

Yellowing leaves can signal soil deficiencies in iron or potash. An application of Iron Chelate or Potassium Sulphate can be applied around the root area of an affected bush. I prefer the liquid or soluble form of these two elements, the required measure, as per instructions on the packet, dissolved in water and watered in using a watering can. For rose leaves which appear unhealthy, I have found respond to Trace Elements applied by the same method. Some Rose or Vegetable mixed fertilizers contain added Trace Elements.

Remove diseased leaves, usually black spot, also diseased leaves that have fallen on the ground. Spray with Triforine or Kocide Blue Xtra (Multicrop) as per directions of the packet. Applications of spray will probably need to be repeated every ten days for the next six weeks or until the disease is under control.

Feed bushes with No. 17, approximately a handful per established 1.5m. bush or a mixed fertilizer as mentioned above . As with all chemical fertilizers apply to wet soil and keep the bushes well watered for the next three weeks. An equivalent of a bucket-full of water per week during favourable

weather conditions or if dry weather conditions prevail, equivalent to two bucket-fulls of water per week.

A light scarifying of the mulch and soil to allow air into the top soil should complete the preparation for autumn.

Roses prone to Backspot require the removal of disease affected leaves on the bush or those which have fallen to the ground. Extra potash can be applied to a bush in the form of a chemical fertilizer, chopped banana skins or hair from clipped horses (or animals). When spraying bushes with a fungicide, spray the affected area on the bush, also around the ground where diseased leaves have fallen.

New red coloured growth appearing at the base of a bush called, Water Shoots, are appearing and they need tender loving care as they are next year's flowering canes. These new shoots are very soft so support with a bamboo stake is often required.