

DO YOU HEAR THEM?

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As the warm days of spring approaches, do you hear them? They are calling you. They are stretching, yawning, and trying to leaf out. Do you hear them? Don't listen, don't listen! If you do, you will be hooked for another year.

Love for the out-of-doors is all you need to grown roses. They will demand all of your time. It starts in early spring and there is no let-up until late fall. To Over-care for roses is impossible. You start the season by removing all that loving care called mulch you piled on them last fall. Armed with small-size loppers, by-pass pruners, a pruning saw, and a jug of glue, down on your hands and knees you go. The soil is still wet from all that snow and rain you wished for during the winter months, so immediately your jeans are wet on the knees. Remember it isn't summer yet. As you go through the spring ritual called pruning, commonly known as spring house cleaning, you crawl from one rose to another. Out comes diseased canes, crossovers, and weak immature ones, cutting down to healthy creamy pith. After several hours, you are not finished yet, but it is getting colder as the sun fades into the west. Your jeans are now wet to the ankles, your hands ache from cutting out all the debris, and your nose has taken on a rosy red glow. But wait, there are a couple more chores that must be done before you can end the day. Glue needs to be applied to the large cut canes, and the implements must be cleaned. This done, you can call it the end of the first day of the growing season.

The next morning you are amazed at how many muscles make up the human body and every one seems to ache. However, can you hear them? They are calling you again. Gathering up the same equipment as yesterday, off you go to clean up your friends. You repeat this same procedure as many times as necessary until you finish that last rose. Following a set routine, spraying with a fungicide is next. This will set the spray pattern for the summer and fall. Can you relax now - not yet. Just because the "spring house cleaning" is over doesn't mean you can relax.

Your friends are calling you. Can you hear them? They are hungry and want their breakfast. They will have some organics for their soil and a big drink of water. Then some chemicals for quick energy; either liquid or dry. If dry, another drink will be necessary. All of this needs to be worked into the surface of the soil. Mulching is the next step. Somewhere between two to three inches of mulch over the entire bed helps to keep the weeds and heat out, and the moisture in. Remember this is only breakfast. Lunch, dinner and a bedtime snack are expected during the growing season.

Time to relax? No, not yet! It is time to watch for garden pests. All summer there will be a host of invaders looking for a delicious rose meal and a special place for a nursery. The 10-14 day spraying program is for fungus. Insect sprays are required to rid your garden of the ravenous invaders. Unfortunately, one insect spray does not eradicate all insects. Consequently, you will need several different kinds of sprays to help you out. They are effective for most insects except, perhaps, the Japanese beetle. The only sure way to rid your garden of those pests is the double paddle method. Place a beetle on one paddle and swat it with the other one. Guaranteed eradication, one at a time!

Relax now? Not yet. These procedures are followed throughout the growing season; fungicide spraying, feeding, watering, pruning including thumb pruning, pest control spraying, deadheading and keeping the entire garden picked and clean. A constant reminder about the rewards of a beautiful bloom is helpful.

The results of your labor begin to show as the roses reach the end of their first blooming cycle. Not all roses have the same number of days in their cycle; therefore, fabulous blooms are usually available. They are

so beautiful, so lovely, so delightful! To pick a rose or a bouquet for yourself or to share with others is indeed rewarding. If you continue this routine, the roses will repeat their bloom cycle. Then you will have beautiful roses all summer and even into the fall. You will quickly forget about the crawling, freezing, spraying, feeding, pruning, etc., etc.

Now, winter is fast approaching - time to mulch and put your friends to bed until you hear them calling next spring. Now you can relax!

HAPPY ROSE GARDENING. IT IS INDEED A MOST WONDERFUL HOBBY!