

Rose Care for October

As I write this, it is hard to believe that fall officially starts tomorrow. But the calendar doesn't lie, and if we have a normal fall, the rains should start in mid-October. Don't let a few early showers fool you. If an inch of rain has not fallen during the week, you will probably still need to water. If in doubt, use a water meter and water if it registers less than moist. Your bushes should have plenty of buds, and regular watering will develop them into beautiful, large roses. Due to the cooler fall weather, the buds will not open as quickly and will have more intense color than during the summer.

Now is the time to stop the three growing season activities:

- Stop applying nitrogen
- Stop cutting long stem roses
- Stop deadheading

The start of the rainy season is one of the best times to transplant roses from one location to another. Cut back the bush you are moving by about a third immediately before moving it. If it has produced some hips, leave as many hips on the bush as possible to inhibit new growth.

This is also the time of the year to decide which roses have "worn out their welcome." Three years is a sufficient time to decide if it deserves to stay. I'm at the point in my garden that if I want to try a new variety an old one has to go. Before discarding the old rose ask yourself:

- How well does it grow compared to its neighbors?
- Does it produce enough flowers?
- Does it get diseases and spread them to its neighbors?
- Has its vigor declined in recent years?
- Do you really like its color and growth habit?

Removing a bush now will give the soil time to rest before you plant the new bareroot rose next January.

One other thing to do before our big winter storms arrive; check your climbing roses and make sure all major canes are securely tied to a support but don't prune them until January.

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