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Keeping Your Roses Rosy

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GARDEN NOTES

KEEPING YOUR ROSES ROSY

By Dennis Hinkamp

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Though there are hundreds of other flowers, roses remain the favorite for expressing our emotions from Valentine's Day to funerals.

Roses do quite well in Utah, says Jerry Goodspeed, Utah State University Extension horticulturist. Many can grow in the high country, surviving the cold, long winters, and others love the valleys. Many different rose varieties are available in our local nurseries and garden centers, but they grow much better in the ground than stuck in a pot. So, pick out rose plants now, while you can see and smell the flowers.

One common trait among roses is they like a well-drained soil, so make sure they are not planted in standing water or puddles, he says. When planting in a heavy, clay soil, reduce the frequency of watering to make sure their roots will get adequate oxygen. When planting a rose, make sure the swollen bud (graft union) is planted above the ground. Most roses are grafted to a hardy rootstock. This supplies a vigorous root system, while the bud (scion wood) grows a beautiful flower. If the bud ever dies out, the root system will begin to grow, producing a rose which usually has smaller leaves, and few, if any, flowers.

"It is important to keep roses pest free this time of year," Goodspeed adds. "This includes removing any weeds or grass from around their base. Roses do not like to compete with any other plant materials. Generally they are considered to be the wimps of the plant kingdom. They are pretty wimps, but wimps just the same."

Pests that can be a problem with roses include thrips, aphids, strawberry root weevil and powdery mildew, he says. Keeping roses healthy and happy contributes a lot to their ability to fend off some pests. To prevent powdery mildew, water deeply and infrequently, try to keep the moisture off the leaves, and use a registered fungicide if necessary. Use a rose systemic product once a month in June, July and August. Systemics keep many pests at bay and also feed roses the nutrients they need for healthy growth and flower production.

Thrips are thin insects that invade rose buds before they even open, Goodspeed says. They can cause distorted flowers, malformed leaves, discoloration and just plain funny looking blossoms. Since they live in the bud before it opens, they can be hard to control. A rose systemic tends to be the best method for getting rid of thrips since it is transferred into the flower. Any registered pesticide with some systemic action, such as products containing acephate, can also be

effective.

“Aphids suck . . . literally,” he says. “They are the small, usually green insects that mass on, or near, the flower bud. They feast on the sugar the plant produces, robbing it of needed energy. A good systemic also helps control them. Organic control methods include spraying with insecticidal soap or a strong stream of water or releasing predators such as lady bugs.”

The strawberry root weevil is a pest that eats little notches out of the leaves, Goodspeed says. Unfortunately, strawberry root weevil deliver a double whammy. While the adult is out munching leaves, the larva is chewing the roots in the ground.

Again, a systemic helps, but it may be necessary to apply another product for complete control. A couple of products that are registered for roses include Pestkil Rose and Rhododendron Dust, and Orthene. Check your local nursery and garden center for other registered products, and be sure to read and follow all label directions.

For more information, contact your local [USU County Extension office](#).

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