

## ***WINTERIZING ROSES, PART II***

Now that you have completed or nearly completed steps 1-3 detailed in last month's newsletter, here are the final steps to putting "the babies to bed."

### **Step 4**

Now we need to find a way to winter protect the roses. The primary need is to protect the bud union. The secondary is to protect as much of the cane as you feel is necessary.

The wind is more detrimental than the cold, so any covering over the canes that blocks the wind will be good protection. After 30 years, I find that many of our roses don't need a lot of protection. So here is where you have to make some decisions. How much money do you want to spend and how much time do you have.

Over the years, I have tried four methods.

1. Soil protection. – Probably the best and the cheapest method, but the soil must come from outside the bed. Clay soil will provide a warm covering, but it must come from outside the rose garden. You must not scrape soil in the bed around the main cane. This takes away covering from the feeder roots that spread out from the cane and are near the surface. It wouldn't make much sense to protect part of a bush at the expense of the remainder. In the spring, it is difficult to remove the soil without damaging the canes. Any nicks in the canes are an entry source for diseases. I believe this is one of the best ways for galls to form on the bud union or the lower canes. I used soil for about 5 years when we started rose growing and decided that was not the way to go.
2. In about 1985, rose cones came out and the society ordered them for members. They are not particularly cheap, but they do a great job of keeping the wind out. However, you need a storage place for them in the summer, and you must be careful not to leave them on too long in the spring or the heat and moisture buildup will cause the canes to blacken and die. In addition, you must trim the canes down to about 12 inches and tie them together with string in order to get the cone over the top. Finally, you need two bricks per cone to keep the wind from blowing them away. I remember one

- winter when even 2 bricks weren't sufficient and we had a half-dozen cones all over the neighborhood. Some of the cones were never recovered.
3. Newspaper collars – Very cheap, but it takes a little time to make them. I put a small amount of mulch around the bud union and then put the collar around the rose and fill it with oak leaves. I try to use leaves that are not near the roses so I don't get diseased rose leaves in the mix. Sycamore and hickory are okay, but maple and other thin flat leaves will clump together and retain moisture and should not be used. Your soil may also benefit from a small amount of composting of the lower leaves during the winter. The downside to this method is removing the leaves in the spring. It takes awhile to remove them and if you don't wear gloves, you will get lots of scratches.
  4. The final method I use is mulch. I have always used cypress since it is usually the cheapest at \$3.00 per 2 cf. Beware of what appears to be a good deal at the local gas stations. They are only 1.5 cf bags so you would have to get them for \$2.25 to get the same deal. There was something in the paper last year about mulch companies that were getting their wood from cypress forests in LA and destroying the microclimate. You were supposed only to buy bags that said the wood was not from there. I got mine from a Grant County, West Virginia, company so I assumed it was safe. This year I have decided to use pine bark which I believe is supposed to break down a little quicker. For me, a bag of mulch will cover 5-6 roses. I only mulch up about 6 inches. The more you put on the more you protect, but it would take a whole bag to cover 2-3 roses to about 12 inches and I don't think that extra 6 inches will make much difference in the long run. If you are in a colder microclimate, it might be worth the effort.

On miniatures, I only winterize a few of the most tender and usually I put miniature rose cones over those tender ones. Generally leaves will catch under the low canes and provide natural protection. For those more upright minis where leaves will not stay, I may use a little mulch. I have one raised bed that takes the brunt of the wind, so I usually build a barrier of plastic garbage bags filled with leaves to protect that bed from the wind.

Step 5.

The final step is to put a dormant spray down after Thanksgiving. Actually, you may want to spray it before Step 3 or at least before you put on your rose cones.

I use a combination of Volck Oil Spray and Lime-Sulfur. The dosage is 5 tablespoons of each per gallon of water. It has a nasty smell and even after it dries and the smell goes away, it can come back when it rains.

Pick a time to spray when the neighbors will be away or inside and make sure the wind isn't blowing (which is tough this time of year). The directions say not to spray when it is very hot, so it should be safe even if the temperatures get to 70.

#### Step 6 (optional)

On some of the roses that are most exposed to the wind, I will use a liquid wax to coat the canes and protect them from the wind. Wiltpruf is the most common product. Generally it is not mixed with water so it can be quite expensive to cover a lot of canes. I generally spray just the lower parts of the thicker canes.

If you have taken these precautions then you can sit back and dream of the great roses you will have next year.