**Preparing Roses for Spring Bloom**

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Your hybrid tea roses have probably already started to re-leaf and may even have buds on them. It is not too late to prepare them for the spring flush of growth and blooms by pruning the plants.

First remove all dead and injured stems. Second, identify three or four healthy stems that are spread around the plant and emerge from the base at about 60 degrees. Remove all the rest of the stems and reduce the remaining stems to about 30 inches tall.

The remaining plant should have an open middle for good air movement and a sturdy framework to support the new growth and blooms.

To support the new growth, begin your regular irrigation program (once/week), fertilize each plant with a cup of slow release lawn fertilizer and begin the spray program.

Hybrid tea roses are susceptible to insects and fungus. To keep the pests at bay, begin a weekly spray program. The traditional pesticides used are triforine (Fungaway and others) for diseases and acephate (orthene and others) for insects.

Organic gardeners can use a combination of sulfur products, neem oil and Spinosad.

For climbing roses, the modern tough roses and old-fashioned roses, the instructions are different.

Climbing roses, the tough modern roses (Knockout, Belinda’s Dream, Katy Road) and old fashioned roses do not need as much attention. Wait until after the climbing roses bloom to prune them. Prune the tough and old fashioned roses every few years to remove dead wood and remove excessive stems. A regular spray program is not required. Irrigate when we have not receive rain for three weeks.

**Gardening Tasks**

To maximize the spring bloom performance of snapdragons, pansies, petunias, dianthus and other cool weather annuals, clear out the weeds and provide 1 cup of fertilizer (19-5-9) per 8 feet of row, and irrigate every week.

Fire ants are on the move. Apply acephate or Spinosad (Concern) to active hills near your activities and spread bait such as Amdro to the rest of the landscape. Follow label instructions.

There is still time to aerate and top-dress your lawn with compost. It is an effective way to deal with soil compaction and to bring organic material into the root zone.

The live oak leaves will decompose within a few weeks and contribute nutrients to the lawn if you mow them where they lay on the lawn.