

## June & July in the Rose Garden-2025

by Wayne Myers, Master Rosarian (reprinted with permission)

Add coleus as colorful bedding plant for hot weather.

**STAY SAFE:** Severely hot weather and hurricane season are here. Our oppressive heat and afternoon showers can be daunting. Try to avoid working in the sun during the hottest part of the day. Accomplish your rose chores and enjoy your flowers in the morning or in the evening. I congratulate Ed Buck—he sprays at night to save the bees and endure less heat stress. The days are so long that there's plenty of time early and late for rose care without risking heat injury. Even so, wear a wide-brimmed hat and sunscreen when you're out in the sun. For years I've also worn gloves, long sleeves, & long pants. Remember to HYDRATE!

Just as we gardeners need lots of water to stay safe and thrive in the heat, our roses must have plenty of water to prevent heat damage and continue flowering. On dry days, late-afternoon drooping of leaves on new growth is the plant's natural reaction to excessive heat. All we can do is keep our plants healthy, keep the beds well-mulched, and water them unless it rains. By late June most rose gardeners decrease feeding as day temperatures climb the 90's and nights rarely drop below 80.

**DEADHEAD:** As your blooms expire, remember to deadhead. Deadheading regularly will encourage more flowers. Deadheading can be as simple as snapping off the spent blooms whenever you see them, or it can be a well-thought-out strategy to keep your plants healthy and restrained. Bushes that have lots of healthy foliage are the key to survival in summer's heat and extreme disease pressure. Therefore, if your bushes are healthy, but bigger than normal or desired, don't hesitate to "deadhead" back to the first five-leaflet leaf—or further—if you need to control the size of the bushes. Remember, however, that temperatures in the 90s really stress our plants and we can expect intense black spot pressure, chilli thrips, and spider mites.

Here is an explanation of summer deadheading by Ludwig Taschner, the "Rose Guru" of South Africa:

*'Breaking or cutting off the dead or faded bloom above the upper most leaves results in new growth sprouting from the highest leaf axils. Expect many short-stemmed smallish blooms within 30 days. By cutting the stem about half-way down on the overall stem length, two medium long-stemmed blooms are ready after about 38 days. Cutting a long stemmed bloom above the second leaf, counting*

*from where the stem sprouted, results in one long stem after 45 days. All this may be carried out on each bush. The very long-stemmed varieties can be cut back by about half to avoid them growing too tall.' ("Talking Roses with Ludwig," Nov 2010)*

Ludwig's rose advice is six-month out of synch with our northern hemisphere climate, but his rose wisdom is unparalleled. Check out his web site at [www.ludwigsroses.co.za/](http://www.ludwigsroses.co.za/).

**SUMMER DORMANCY:** Geoff Coolidge of Cool Roses, West Palm Beach, Florida, uses a contrarian approach to hot weather rose care. Because many of his rose-care clients are not in Florida during our worst heat and disease pressure, he encourages his clients' roses to go dormant in the heat of summer. By not deadheading and feeding, Geoff discourages new growth which is more vulnerable to pests and disease than old growth. All land plant leaves are covered by cuticle, a non-cell, waxy film that covers the outer surface of leaves. The cuticle is impervious to water and protects against external environmental stresses such as black spot and sucking pests—aphids, thrips and mites.

Most rose bushes grow much more slowly when daytime temperatures are over 90. Furthermore, conditions for chilli thrips, spider mites, and black spot are ideal when humidity is high and night-time temperatures stay above 80. The thicker, harder cuticle makes mature rose foliage much more resistant to disease and pests than new growth. Leaving spent blooms on the bush, rather than deadheading, causes the plants to redirect their energy to producing seeds, rather than creating new growth and more blooms.

Although our North Florida climate is cooler overall, I agree with the plant-science behind Geoff's encouragement of summer dormancy to discourage the summer scourges of black spot, chilli thrips, and spider mites. Are you willing to trade more disease-resistant leaves for smaller and paler summer flowers?

Grow leaf-spot-disease-resistant varieties or maintain a spray program that includes both contact and systemic fungicides. Ideal conditions exist for spore germination and fungal growth when temperatures above 70° and moisture is present for 6-8 hours—doesn't that sound like EVERY Florida night from May until late September? Like other disease pathogens, fungi can evolve to resist systemic chemicals, so it's best to alternate the systemic chemicals in your spray mix. When I sprayed, I alternated the Banner Maxx generic Honor Guard (Qual-Pro is a cheaper generic of Honor Guard) and Cleary's 3336F because they are both effective, have different Modes of Action (MOA), and are easy to acquire and legal to use in FL. Each spray mix should also include a contact fungicide such as Dithane M-45. Spraying every other week will prevent black spot on

most varieties. Don't forget to add a spreader-sticker: Miller's Spray-Aid and Scarlet are effective.

Keep up your spray program—if black spot establishes, you must at least double the spray frequency until your foliage is again clean. Some rosarians will strip off any leaflet showing black spot and pick up and remove any diseased leaves that have fallen to the ground. As black spot progresses in a leaflet, the leaflet turns yellow and drops to the ground. droplets.

Again, I recommend the booklet "Guide to Rose Diseases and Their Management" by Drs Mark and Alan Windham and Alan Henn. It's a free download from the American Rose Society's website at [rose.org](http://rose.org), then click on disease in the Education tab on the home page.

**CHILLI THRIPS** (*Scirto thrips dorsalis*): For more information about chilli thrips, review the information on the University of Florida Institute of Food and Agricultural Sciences (UF/IFAS) Chilli thrips web site at <http://mrec.ifas.ufl.edu/iso/thripslinks.htm>

The site has lots of pictures of the critters as well as pictures of their damage on roses and other plants. The pictures of their damage are most helpful because chilli thrips are so small that they can't be identified by the naked eye. The adult chilli thrip is approximately 1/2 the length of the Western Flower Thrip (WFT).

In 2009 through 2011 I successfully prevented major chilli damage in my garden for three years by applying granular Merit (imidacloprid) in late March. However, in 2012 and 2013 I lost many more bushes to chilli thrips. Chilli thrips favor new growth over the buds and blooms favored by the WFT. Deformed, crinkly new shoots and leaves are the earliest signs of chilli thrips damage that appear before you will see damaged blooms. As damaged leaflets mature, they will have brown or gray scars on their undersides. Severe, untreated infestations will result in severe bloom damage and death of the plant for many varieties.

To confirm the identity of these tiny pests, tap a badly distorted sprig of new growth on a piece of white paper, or swish it in alcohol. Any small specks like pepper on the paper or in the alcohol could be chilli thrips; confirm by looking with a strong magnifying glass or jeweler's loupe. The mrec.ifas.ufl web site also lists several systemic chemical pesticides that are effective against chilli thrips. After going to the home page of the chilli thrips site, click on the "Management" link to see the list of chemicals.

An untreated chilli thrips infestation kills most varieties of rose bushes or weakens them so much that they may die from black spot and heat stress, or are permanently stunted. University of Florida research found that on susceptible

rose varieties, cultural and biological control measures used alone could not control chilli thrips; therefore, to control them requires spraying and/or drenching with a systemic insecticide rated for thrips. Dr. Vivek Kumar, a thrips researcher who worked under contract for the US Department of Agriculture and Florida IFAS, advocates that drenching the soil around roses with imidacloprid or cyantraniliprole is effective and would be less damaging to thrips predators and pollinators than foliar sprays.

In my own gardens, certain varieties seem less susceptible such as 'Napoleon,' 'Smith's Parish,' *Rosa rugosa alba*, 'Mrs. B.R. Cant,' and most of my Hybrid Musks showed little chilli thrips damage when others had to be sprayed or die. My Kordes hybrid teas, 'Beverly' and 'Wedding Bells' displayed some resistance. Left unsprayed, chilli thrips killed my 'Knock Out' roses within three years. These observations that rose varieties vary in susceptibility to chilli thrips were confirmed by the small UF/IFAS research project for which the Jacksonville Rose Society provided supplemental funding in 2016.

Systemic insecticides, such as Merit (imidacloprid), Conserve (spinosad), or Orthene (acephate), provided effective control in UF/IFAS trials. These three chemicals have different Modes of Action (MOAs). Never use a systemic pesticide with the same MOA more than twice in a row. You may have to spray as often as every ten days, rotating chemicals by MOA. For even better control, as UF/IFAS scientists determined, drench your rose beds with a systemic in addition to spraying. Drenching my rose beds with Flagship (thiamethoxam) provided good control in 2014. The manufacturer claims eight weeks of control after a drench and says the chemical is gentle to beneficials.

According to Gaye Hammond of the Houston Rose Society, rosarians there have been able to control chilli thrips with Suffoil-X (a spray oil emulsion insecticide), but Florida researchers found it to be only marginally effective in their research. If you spray for chilli thrips, avoid the middle of the day. Around midday, the adults fly in swarms and spraying would miss many of them. Spray very early or very late to minimize danger to pollinators. If chilli thrips are causing unacceptable damage to your roses, you will not be able to eradicate them—only suppress and control them.

Chilli thrips are opportunistic, polyphagous (they will feed on many, many different plants) feeders; therefore, if they are on your roses, they are also established on other plants in your landscape. Just before I sprayed my new St Augustine roses for the first time to control chilli thrips, I had pruned the Ligustrum hedge along the west side of the house two weeks earlier. To my dismay, the emerging new growth on the Ligustrum showed chilli thrips damage almost immediately. University of Florida scientists have identified over 100

economically significant plant species that chilli thrips will damage. See the list at <http://mrec.ifas.ufl.edu/lso/thripslinks.htm#HOSTS>.

Although it has not been confirmed by scientific research, another valuable observation from Geoff Coolidge of Cool Roses, West Palm Beach, is that he suspects hot nights are more influential than hot days in increasing the reproduction rates of chilli thrips. Their reproduction and damage may also be slowed by spraying with a water wand as you would for spider mites. Spray the entire plant but remember that chilli thrips prefer the new foliage. Because chilli thrips lay their eggs in the soft tissue on the bottoms of the young foliage, water spray only decreases the population rather than eradicating all the thrips.

**SPIDER MITES:** Spider mites are another hot weather pest that can devastate your roses. Evidence of mite damage usually appears first on the plants' lower leaves because the mites' reproductive cycle takes place in the soil. The adults climb up the bush to feed, suck juice from the leaves, then fall back to the ground to reproduce. Watch for dried and browning leaves that have spider-like-webbing and fine-sand-grainy-looking residue on their undersides. Some rose varieties are much more susceptible than others—spider mites showed up first on 'Don Juan' and 'Rose de Rescht' in my garden.

Don't ignore them--an infestation left unchecked can severely weaken or kill a plant. Normal insecticides are not very effective, but there are specialty chemicals called miticides (acaricides) available. However, the most effective are hard to find, expensive, and illegal for home-landscape use. The best, Avid (abamectin) is also effective against chilli thrips, but may damage your plants if applied in hot weather.

Fortunately, water spray can provide adequate control. Use a nozzle to forcefully wash your bushes from the bottom up, concentrating on the undersides of the leaves. My spider-mite wand works well. Because the spider mite's life cycle in hot weather is approximately seven days, wash the plants again four or five days later, then again after another four or five days. Your heat-stressed bushes will benefit from the extra water and the natural predators—stronger and more mobile than the mites—will return to finish off the mites that weren't blasted off the plants by your spray.

**MULCH:** Beyond frequent watering, how can we help our roses endure the heat? Mulch would probably top any list. Mulch shades the beds, keeps soil temperatures lower and more stable, and decreases water loss through evaporation. Sure you've noticed that every season brings new varieties of weeds that out-compete our roses? These seasonally optimized weeds easily out-compete our roses for nutrients and blemish the appearance of our gardens. Discourage their germination by thickly mulching your beds. Several

years ago, I had such thick Purple Nut Sedge and Florida Betony that I gave up and treated the worst beds with Roundup—repeatedly—before I could replant roses.

**FOUR-LEGGED PESTS:** In Orange Park, armadillos have increased my weed woes. Healthy rose beds have lots of earthworms, a favorite armadillo food. All spring they dig with their snouts for worms. The “nose holes” they leave in the mulch covering the beds quickly fill up with weeds. The bare spot can't simply be covered over because the creatures have compressed the pine straw and created mounds and holes that must be carefully smoothed and rearranged unless you re-mulch frequently to cover the bare spots.

If deer are browsing on your roses, you can google for a method. A “secret” solution recommended by one of our members is to liberally sprinkle human urine in your rose beds.

From personal experience, I know the commercial repellent does not have to be renewed as often as pee. In his Wisconsin garden, Will Radler, the hybridizer of ‘Knock Out’ roses, distributes small (1/3-cup) piles of Milorganite every ten feet along the perimeter of his beds to repel deer. Renew the Milorganite every couple of weeks. This method has worked for me in St Augustine. It should work well unless your garden is already a part of the local herd's nightly browsing route. I've even noticed un-nibbled roses when fresh deer scat was immediately outside my Milorganite barrier.

This year I forgot to lay out my Milorganite “fence.” Therefore, in late March, the deer grazed all my front yard rose bed. I laid out a perimeter of Milorganite, and they haven't been back.

**FERTILIZER:** To feed your roses through the summer heat, I recommend time or heat release fertilizer (Osmocote is heat release) and organics such as Jim Young's Purely Organic or Mills' Magic. Organic mixes release the nutrients slowly as the soil microbes break down the organics. They also resist the leaching that naturally occurs in sandy soils because we must water frequently, and thunderstorms provide drenching downpours.

Enjoy summer and share your roses! Wayne