

MAY GARDENING TIPS - Rose Care

From Your President Kim Chandler

A chemical-free way to keep roses healthy and minimize disease associated with foggy summer mornings is to prune to improve air circulation. Think of your rose bushes as large vases, with open centers. Good air circulation allows the morning dew to dry and helps prevent rust and powdery mildew.

**Deadheading**

Deadheading means removing spent blossoms from your plants. Not all plants need deadheading, but if flowers stay on the plant and become unattractive (think roses, dahlias, marigolds, cornflowers, geraniums and many more), then consider a little pruning. The technique varies by plant; some spent flowers can be snapped off by hand (dahlias), others are better done with hand pruners (roses) and some can be sheared off all together (lavender). You will not only make the plant look better, you will stimulate additional blooming for plants that have a long blooming season.

**Powdery Mildew**

Powdery mildew fungus is a common disease on many plants and produces a white powdery appearance on leaves and sometimes other green parts. It can be found on roses, dahlias, chrysanthemums, peas and squash. Some rose varieties are so susceptible that you would be better off removing the plant.

Powdery mildew likes warm days and cool nights. General tips: maintain good air circulation, remove summer veggies if heavily infected and clean up well, and plant resistant varieties next year. Powdery mildew is difficult to treat—the best method of control is prevention by planting resistant varieties.

**Pruning Azaleas, Rhododendrons and Camellias**

Azaleas and rhododendrons can be pruned as soon as they finish flowering. It is also a good time to fertilizer them with an acid-forming fertilizer blended for these particular plants. Camellia should be pruned just after flowering and before new vegetative growth gets going. If you prune later in the season, you risk damaging next year’s blossoms.