How To Tuck Your Roses In For Winter

Roses are much hardier plants than their delicate blooms suggest. Except in the coldest areas of the country, bush roses can survive the winter without the arduous steps taken by many gardeners to protect them.

In her book, "Anyone Can Grow Roses," Dr. Cynthia Westcott, the noted rose authority, writes about winter protection. Referring to the results of an experiment in which she mounded one-half the roses in the Montclair, New Jersey Garden Center and left the other half unprotected, Dr. Westcott says, "I decided then and there never to hill another rose and I never have (except of course after planting). I have had no cause to regret this decision."

The best survival course for your roses, says the world's largest grower of the flower, starts in the summer. Strong, healthy plants, properly nourished and disease-free, have a much better chance of surviving than their neglected neighbors. Healthy foliage during the growing season is necessary if the plant is going to "manufacture" mature wood by the time dormancy comes in the fall.

Over-pruning or diseased foliage endangers the plant by permitting it to approach winter with immature, cold-susceptible wood.

Wherever the temperature drops to 10 degrees above zero or less, roses need a cold weather blanket simply because they get too cold; the primary plant damage is due to low temperatures. In regions that don't usually fall below 18 to 20 degrees above zero, there is a possibility of damage, not from sustained low temperatures, but from severely fluctuating temperatures and drying winds.

ROSES CAN accept winter better if they are able to become gradually conditioned to increasingly cold weather. This adjustment to lowering temperatures is termed "hardening off." A rose not hardened off is referred to as "soft."

A cold snap followed by warm weather can reawaken the bush as it tries to go dormant, lessening its winter hardiness. Feeding roses too late in the season can artificially induce this situation, prolonging the growth period past the time when the plants should be going dormant.

"Do not fertilize any later than six to eight weeks before the first frost is expected," advises Bill Fike, horticulturist, "the last feeding generally should be made no later than Sept. 1."

Another pre-winter preparation is pruning. When cutting your roses back in the fall, leave some latitude for freezing – don't prune lower than two feet above the ground; at this height, several inches of cane can freeze and there still be a live portion. Do your final pruning in the spring just before the plants break dormancy.

IN THE REGIONS that definitely require protection, mounding is a common method. If your roses need protection, bring in soil from another area rather than scraping it up from the bed. Mound it in and around the bush to a height of 12 inches or more. Do not use a material that will mat or that is too dense to permit air circulation to the roots.

Bill Fike strongly advises against the use of leaves. "Leaves," says Fike, "will mat when wet, shutting off the oxygen supply to the roots and creating an ideal environment for the growth of fungus."

Straw is placed by some gardeners over their dirt mounds after the mounds have frozen to prevent the freeze-thaw cycle that can damage roots.

"That's the plus side of using straw," comments Fike, adding, "but when it becomes wet it also provides an environment for the growth of fungus."

Whatever the mounding material used, don't leave it around the plants too long after spring arrives. If new shoots begin to grow under the mound, they are easily damaged when the mound is removed.

Styrofoam rose cones are commercially available for plant protection. About ¾-inch thick, they keep the temperature inside from fluctuating drastically. A large bush will have to be trimmed severely to accommodate them. As with mounds, cones should be removed soon after new growth appears. If there is still a chance of frost, they can be carefully replaced at night.

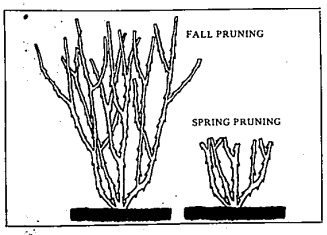
THE MAIN protection required by climbers is to be secured against wind whip by tying them to the trellis or house. Tree roses, which are budded to a long stem, require protection in cold areas.

The safest method in severely cold areas is to dig under the roots on one side, lay the rose on the ground and cover it with soil.

One method that can be used in less cold climates is to cover the top of the rose with burlap, within which is placed an insulation material such as shavings.

Healthy roses, except for the very coldest regions and except for tree plants, need little or no help to survive the winter.

Dr. Westcott's advice is well worth considering: "... experiment with your roses and see if they really require all that labor and expense in your area."



Suburban Gardener

Easy-To-Grow Hostas Thrive In Shady Spots

By BETTY FRANKEL
Special Writer

Funkia is probably what grandmother called that handsome large - leaved perennial plant growing along the shady side of her house, but gardeners now - a - days know it as hosta or plantain lily or August lily. They are hardy, decorative, easy to grow plants that are real gems for the shady parts of the garden.

They are perennials that sprout up early in spring forming low rounded mounds of beautiful foliage. This would be reason enough for growing these plants, but there is an added bonus. At this season the mounds of foliage are topped by spikes of lavender - blue or white flowers.

The botanical names are even more confused than the common names. In some cases the same variety has several different names assigned to it. Also the names have been changed or switched at various times.

They are generally known these days as Hostas. The name commemorates an Austrial physician, Nicolous T. Host.

Hostas are natives of China and Japan. There are about 10 species in all. They are members of the lily family and are close relatives of the true garden lilies. Like all members of this plant family their flower parts are in multiples of three. They have six petals joined to form a tubular bell - shaped bloom.

GRAMDMA'S favorite, the kind most commonly seen in old yards, is Hosta subcordata. It has large, rather heart - shaped leaves with prominent ribs. The flowers are large, and white and very fragrant. Unlike other hostas which have pendant blooms, this kind has erect or ascending flowers on stalks 20 to 30 inches high.

Hosta subcordata grandiflora has especially large leaves. It comes into bloom in August and September, one of the last of the hostas to bloom and is a beautiful plant all season.

"Royal Standard" is a hybrid of Hosta grandiflora. The leaves are broad but not heart shaped. The fragrant white flowers are smaller, but they are produced abundantly on two-foot tall stems.

Most of the hostas have lavender flowers. Of these the most widely planted is Hosta caerulea. It has broad deep green leaves. Hosta lancifolia has narrow leaves. There are varieties of both of these with variegated leaves - some green with a white margin, others green edged with a creamy white blotch in the center of each leaf.

Perhaps most unusual and striking of all are the hostas with large bluish leaves. Hosta sieboldiana has large metallic blue leaves and short spikes of pale lavender flowers. Hosta Fortunei is similar, but with narrower leaves and taller flower stalks. The leaves are a similar blue - green color.

HOSTAS CAN be grown in the perennial bed and most will tolerate some sun, but they are best used in shady or partially shaded areas where it is difficult to grow other flowers. They thrive best in moist soil that is rich in humus. They are seldom troubled by diseases or insects.

Hostas are easily propagated by division of the clumps. In spring or fall large clumps can be dug up, sliced or pried apart, and the pieces replanted with the tops just below ground level.

Hostas can be included in the mixed perennial bed, but they are most effective when used in masses. They can be used to form a beautiful ground cover in the shade beneath an old tree, or they can fill a narrow, shady space between the house and a walk or driveway.

They can form a low ribbon of foliage bordering the driveway or edging a bed of shrubs or flowers.

The variegated forms or those with blue-green leaves make handsome accent plants. They are effective in the rock garden, or planted in front of evergreens.

The flowers can be cut for use in bouquets. Also, the leaves are useful in flower arrangements. Try tucking in some large hosta leaves when a mass of green is needed at the base of an arrangement or use hosta leaves when the foliage on other flowers is damaged or unattractive.

Also, for an unusual house plant, dig up and pot a clump of variegated hosta in late fall or early spring. The new leaves will soon sprout up and make a decorative display.

THE CROCUS has a long and healthy history, its dried stigmas being used for Greek medicines. But its most effective use has always been in its natural state, where its early blooms are a balm for winter weary eyes. The flower's curative powers are evident in this Christmas Crocus, preplanted in a hand-painted Delft Ware bowl.

The Green Thumb

By GEORGE ABRAHAM

Home grown tomatoes: In some areas this has been a poor tomato year. If yours have a poor fruit set, it can be due to temperatures being either too low or too high.

Night temperatures between 70 and 75 degrees and day temperatures between 80 and 90 degrees are ideal for fruit setting. Such temperatures will produce larger fruit as well. Night temperatures either below 60 degrees or above 80 degrees and day temperatures above 90 degrees are unfavorable to fruit set.

Large vine growth is more often the result of poor fruit setting than the cause of no fruit. Rain or irrigation has little to do with fruit set. Actually, the failure of the tomato flower to set is determined 10 to 14 days prior to the time the flower actually falls off. Poor light due to cloudy weather results in poor fruit set and production.

All vines and no fruit can be due to shade, poor pollination, rich soil and the variety itself. It's possible to get a variety such as Rutgers into an "all vine, no fruit" stage much more easily than some of the earlier varieties. Early applications of fertilizer often result in all vines and no tomatoes.

FREEZE your squash: If your family is tiring of squash why not slice it and freeze this healthful vegetable? This winter it will taste mighty good, especially when the price of squash in the supermarket runs around 49 cents a pound. A lot of squash goes to waste on the vines because the whole family gets fed up with it. So don't let the squash grow to the size of a watermelon and go to waste. Pick and freeze them now for winter eating.

BUD DROP of violets: Dropping of African violet buds can be due to any of the following causes: Too dry atmosphere, lack of humidity, too little light, not enough air circulation, extremes of temperature and dry soils. This sounds formidable, but actually folks who grow violets say they are the easiest of all house plants to grow. Just a little common sense quickly pinpoints the problem.

GREEN THUMB CLINIC: "We have some flower pots and boxes which should be disinfected before we report. What's a simple method?

Scrub your pots or soak them in a solution of one ounce of copper sulfate crystals to a gallon of water. This makes a good fungicide.

Conservation Club Open

The public may attend at open house Sept. 23 at the Western Wayne County Conservation Assn., 6700 Napier, Plymouth.

The open house will be held in conjunction with National Hunting and Fishing Day, and Chairman Vic Cuppetilli said a program of activities and exhibits is planned.

FIX-IT TIP

Hand tools, such as pliers and shears, should have a drop of light household oil on moving parts. Don't forget that a light film of oil will prevent rust.

When equipment becomes rusted or frozen, you need penetrating oil. Apply this in liberal amounts at all points where surfaces meet. Allow to soak for a time before trying to free the surfaces.