PERENNIALS, GROUNDCOVERS, AND ANNUALS: CARE AND MAINTENACE

After your perennials are first installed it may look as though your perennials are planted to far apart. Keep in mind that this extra room allows space for them to grown into their mature state without crowding.

To maintain perennials for flower production, deadheading is necessary throughout their bloom time. Dead heading isthe practice of cutting off old blooms to extend the life of your flowers tricking the plants into producing more blooms by delaying seed production.

Spring/Fall maintenance of perennials can vary, however most can be cut back between Halloween and Thanksgiving, or as soon as the snow melts, leaving 2 to 2½" of stalk or stem. Perennials can be fertilized with a balanced slow release fertilizer ensure healthy vigorous growth. Be sure to keep fertilizers off foliage to avoid foliage damage.

Annuals

Annuals are chosen specifically for the landscape conditions of your site: some prefer moist or dry soils, some sun or shade. If you are planting your own annuals, wait until after Memorial Day to install them to avoid harmful frosts. Dead heading is essential to get the maximum bloom time of your annuals. Feed your annuals every 3-4 weeks with a general flowering plant fertilizer. Water when the soil begins to feel dry.

Groundcovers

Due to the fragile leafy nature of groundcovers, they tend to come through their first winter(s) in poor condition. **Please take note:** They may look brown, withered and/or sparse leaves while the plants are generating new growth from their roots. It may take a few months for them to fill in.

In early April and May, consider a light application of a well to balanced granular fertilizer, making sure to follow label directions. Most groundcovers require attention beyond routine watering, composting, fertilizing, and grooming.

One of the primary reasons for planting ground covers is to eliminate weeding.

However, until the ground cover fills in, some weeding is usually necessary.

Getting rid of weeds before they set seed is important to prevent ongoing problems. Routine composting will aide in weed control and plant vigor. For serious weed problems you may be able to use a selective herbicide (one that will kill weeds but not your groundcover). Read the label of any herbicide carefully to determine which weeds it kills and which ornamental plant it leaves unaffected.

ROSES: CARE AND MAINTENANCE

Mulching

Mulch, at a three inch depth, improves the quality of a rose plant in several ways:

- Mulch helps control weeds
- Decreases water evaporation from the soil without decreasing absorption
- Decreases temperature swings in the soil, keeping it cool during the summer and warm during the winter
- Keeps you from running into the rose with a weed eater or lawnmower

Many types of materials are suitable for mulch. Some commonly used materials are pine needles, wood chips, coconut hulls, peanut hulls, compost, and rotted leaves. Sometimes rocks and gravel are used, but they are less effective because they do not help feed the soil.

Fertilizing

Non Repeating Roses bloom once a year. In good soil they are capable of going years without fertilizer. Their performance can be enhanced by the application of a slow release fertilizer to the soil in early spring, as the plant comes out of dormancy.

Remontant Roses are repeat bloomers and therefore tend to use up more resources when making blossoms. For this reason, fertilizing remontants (Hybrid Teas, Florlbundas, Bourbons, Shrubs and Climbing Roses) are essential.

Apply a slow release fertilizer in the spring. Apply a liquid fertilizer each subsequent month for three months. If the rose stops producing blossoms over the summer because of extremely hot conditions, it is not a good idea to keep applying fertilizer.

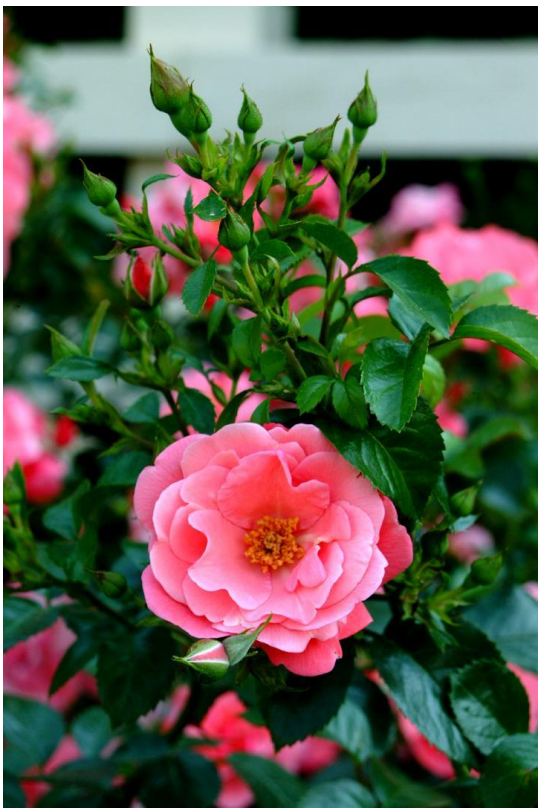
In our zone (5-6), it is not a good idea to fertilize after the first of September. The roses need to "harden off" for the winter and fertilizer promotes soft new growth that is prone to freezing.

Choosing a Fertilizer

Choose a fertilizer that is labeled as being for roses. This will have the right balance of nitrogen, phosphorous and potassium for roses specifically. Nitrogen stimulates top-growth. Phosphorus stimulates blooming, and potassium supports root development. Product labels state the amount of each in this order N-P-K (nitrogen, phosphorous and potassium).

A fertilizer too rich in nitrogen will cause a plant to grow fast but may inhibit flowering and cause pest problems. Thrips and aphids can damage soft new growth tissues. Most rose formulations have somewhat more phosphorus than nitrogen or potassium.

Watering



The rule of thumb is that roses need an inch of water per week, taking rainfall into consideration. In places where summers are cool, roses will have somewhat lower water requirements. Roses go dormant in the summer because with intense heat their water consumption it considerably slowed.

Roses prone to fungal diseases are particularly finicky about how and when they get water, but many roses such as Albas, Gallicas, and Damasks may do well without any extra water after the first year.

A good method of watering is with an open hose. In this case, the ground around the rose must be dished to catch the water, or else it will run off before soaking in.

If sprinklers are used, watering should take place within an hour or two of dawn. At this time the air is cool and little evaporation loss occurs before the water reaches the ground. **Watering early in the evening is not healthy for the rose because it encourages fungal infection; watering in the heat of the day is bad because much of the water evaporates before reaching the ground.** This accelerates the buildup of soluble minerals in the soil that over a long time can be ruinous to soil health.

Ideally, you should provide one Inch of water with every soaking, and do so not more than once per week.

Spraying

There are two general types of sprays; systemic fungicides and barrier sprays. Systemic fungicides work by being absorbed into the rose tissue. Then, when a fungal spore invades the plant the fungicide kills the spore. Barrier sprays work by preventing contact between the fungal spore and the leaf.

We encourage you, when using any chemicals, to carefully follow the label and wear the proper personal protection clothes such as masks, eye protection, and chemical resistant gloves. **Contact TruNorth for any help you may need when using chemicals or fertilizer.**

Pruning

Pruning can provide many benefits. Deadheading prolongs blossoming on remontant roses. Removal of dead wood decreases the chances of disease. Thinning increases the vigor of the remaining canes. Shaping causes the aesthetic appeal of the rose to increase.

The first thing to consider is when to prune. The very best time is just before the plant leafs out. Pruning stimulates growth, so this is an ideal time. Frequently one can tell this by seeing nodules form on the surface of the canes where the canes will be sprouting leaves. Deadheading is done after a rose blooms. If the rose is not remontant, deadheading does little more than make that plant look slightly cleaner.

Special Note: Although roses are a beautiful addition to the landscape, roses take a great deal of time and maintenance for their survival and development. Please do not hesitate to contact TruNorth for assistance.