

Ask The Plant Groom™ by Dale Groom, The Plant Groom™

QA1070

Should I be pruning roses now? Thank you. - B. D.

Normally, the only pruning of roses done this time of year is ... “dead heading”. I know it’s a bit morbid sounding but it’s the term-utilized nation wide. This limited pruning activity is the removal of spent blooms and their stalks.

On species and other rose types these structures are often left on the plant to grow and mature into rose hips that are often ornamental, add color and an interesting eye appeal to roses. Roses that are continual bloomers throughout the growing season are often deadheaded as a cultural practice to aid in the production of additional blooms. The spent bloom pods may be removed by cutting with a tool or pinched off by hand.

If your roses have become so large they grab you or anyone that walks past you may wish to conduct a selective removal of these “grabbers”. Severe pruning of roses in our state is mid Feb. removing of dead twigs may be done anytime.

Here’s my note of recommendation for you and all readers of this column. Earth Kind Roses™ once established do not require pruning nor dead heading, provide an outstanding show of blooms throughout the season, do not require fertilizing or spraying and are Water Wise.

When looking at adding additional roses to your landscape and for anyone wanting to plant the “first rose” I strongly recommend you select one of more of the (13) different Earth Kind Roses™ on the market today. Potential Earth Kind Roses™ are field tested in real world situations by Texas Cooperative Extension Horticulturists and collaborating partners state wide to earn the designation of Earth Kind Rose™.

Additional information regarding Earth Kind Roses™ is available at <http://aggie-horticulture.tamu.edu/earthkindrose> and <http://dallas-tx.tamu.edu> then click on Horticulture, Home Gardening and Earth Kind Roses™. You will also find other valuable Earth Kind™ information at this location.

I’m looking for some evergreen shrubs to grow in large containers on our deck and would like to know what you recommend. - T. J.

T. J., There are many possibilities here in Texas but I’ll share with you some I personally prefer.

One item. I’m not sure how large your definition of ... large is. I’ll base my recommendations on what Judy, my child bride of almost (37) years and I use. We use 16 – 20” containers of various configurations and construction.

Containers may be plastic, fiberglass, terracotta, ceramic, wood or just about any other material you wish to use. One key physical item that should be present in all containers is ... holes. Drain holes specifically. I have great results using 10, 15 and 20 gallon nursery containers when growing containerized evergreens and seasonal color for our deck, drive, walk and other locations.

Drain holes should be located on the sides just above the container's floor. This is similar to the location of drain holes in nursery containers. One drain hole centered in the bottom of a container often is not adequate to supply the necessary drainage for healthy root growth. Remember, healthy roots = healthy plants. It is not possible to grow quality plants without healthy roots.

For ceramic and terracotta containers carbide masonry drill bits work well for drilling drain holes in these types of container. Wood, fiberglass, aluminum, stainless steel, copper and brass container may be drilled with most sharp high-speed drill bits. I recommend a minimum of (4) 1/2" diameter holes spaced evenly around a container's circumference.

Use a premium quality professional potting soil when installing plants in containers.

Take a look at the following plants for consideration in your containers that will be located in full sun location for (6) hours to all day Nandina including domestica, compacta, 'Gulf Stream' and 'Firepower'. Of the dwarf types 'Firepower' is my favorite. 'Winter Gem' boxwood does super. I do not recommend Japanese boxwood in containers. In the holly family there's a plethora of possibilities, some that are widely available include 'Carissa', 'Willowleaf', 'Dwarf Yaupon', 'Weeping Yaupon' and many more. The old fashion Abelia grandiflora and the newer hybrids 'Prostrata' and 'Sunrise' would provide; interesting foliage color, bloom color plus butterflies and hummers.

I would not plant euonymus or junipers in containers due to potential pest problems.

If you also look at some of the deciduous shrubs for your plantings that will add "eye candy" let me recommend the following: crape myrtles of all types and colors. Ask for the mildew resistant varieties when shopping. Altheas or Rose-Of-Sharon are especially great if you like the looks of hibiscus and they are available in various bloom colors and types. My favorite althea is 'Diana', a beautiful pure white variety. Buddleia or Butterfly Bush should be on this list for fragrance, color, form, texture and ... butterflies.

Try some of these suggestions and let me know how they "work" for you.

Dale's Notes:

The "heat" has arrived or it soon will for its annual visit. The following are some suggestions on how to manage the landscape during this time and be ... Water Wise:

- Install a drip irrigation system and only water when the plants need it. DO NOT water by some predetermined schedule
- Maintain a mulch such as pine bark, shredded bark, shredded tree trimmings or similar organic material 3-4" deep. DO NOT mulch beds with non-organic materials such as gravel. Gravel, crushed rock and similar products act as heat sinks. We do not need to add any heat to our soils, plus they do not add valuable texture, nutrients or water holding capacity to the soil.
- When installing seasonal color, shrubs, trees, vines, groundcovers and/or turf plant the best locally adapted Water Wise selections available.

Following these suggestions I've outlined can reduce your potable usage in the landscape by 50% or more plus grow healthy and attractive plants.

Dale Groom, Extension Horticulturist -Dallas County, Texas Cooperative Extension, Native Texan, Columnist, Author, Radio/TV Host is also known state wide as The Plant Groom™. Send your lawn, garden and landscape questions to Dale at dalegroom@mycvc.net. To speak with a Master Gardener M-F, 8:30a - 4p call 214-904-3053.

Copyright 2006 by Groom Media and all rights are reserved.