



How to feed your rose

A warning about over-feeding

Most people over-fertilize their gardens. The number one cause of rose death I've seen is due to over-feeding. Over-feeding usually happens when a keen gardener plants a new rose, and rather than giving it a chance to root and grow, tries to force the growth with extra nutrients. Keep your plants well-watered when new and add a "reasonable" amount of water and fertilizer when established, according to our directions below.

Feeding basics

You can choose to use strictly organic fertilizers or blend them with conventional ones. I've used both with excellent results. At Select Roses, we recommend our own custom-blended, naturally-based Select Rose Food (22-5-15 + Minors with 50% slow-release nitrogen), designed to help you grow lush healthy roses in Coastal BC.

- 1. Soil:** Feeding depends on your type of soil. As a rule, roses prefer a rich clay loam, but one that is well drained. Roses will thrive in many types of soils, though, from sandy to clay. And like many plants, they prefer a pH that is slightly acidic (5.5 to 6.8 is ideal). Higher pH levels (closer to or over 7) mean the soil is neutral to alkaline, and it can cause many nutrients to be "tied" up. Rose varieties sensitive to higher pH levels can show pale chlorotic foliage. If you are having significant problems with rose or other plants in your garden, you can opt to have your soil tested in a lab to get to the root of the problem.
- 2. Spring Feeding:** Wait until the ground warms before you feed. This is around mid-April in Coastal B.C. Sunshine and nature push spring growth, not fertilizer in cold soil. Use Select Rose Food, or another quality granular rose food at the label rate. Often, that rate is about one handful per established rose bush. Use a bit more for larger rose plants, climbers, shrubs, and less for a smaller bush. These granular fertilizers are usually designed to slow-release, and should be sprinkled around the root zone of the bush and gently raked in.
- 3. Summer Rose Feeding:** Early summer, just after the first flush of blooms in June, is the time to give your roses their second feeding. To keep things simple, you can use the same all-purpose rose food that you used in spring. After you rake in the summer rose food, water thoroughly. Roses are actually very drought resistant, but they will perform better and flower more if you water them during dry periods. If the soil is bone dry, the plants will not benefit from their summer feeding. Water again in about a week's time.
- 4. Liquid Feeding:** Using a liquid-type fertilizer between your seasonal feedings is a wonderful way to improve your roses' health and flowering. There are too many of these products on the market to even begin to comment in full. However, my roses LOVE fish fertilizer. Use a fish fertilizer to water around the plants and spray on the foliage to give your roses a real pick-me-up.
- 5. Mulches:** There are loads of great mulches you can add to your rose bed. They are wonderful for keeping the roses happy and the soil moist, but they also provide nutrients and improve soil structure. Home compost is great, but you can also use aged manures, aged bark mulch, coco fibre products, and a vast assortment of prepared bagged mulches.



How to feed your rose

Feeding container roses

Use long term (three to four-month) slow release fertilizers, combined with regular applications of a very mild liquid fertilizer, such as fish fertilizer. Refer to our "How to grow roses in containers" page for more information.