

## Winterizing Your Rose Garden By Kent Campbell, BGRS Consulting Rosarian

The mornings have been cooler lately, and this morning (Oct. 20) there was a heavy frost at my house. You may have experienced one at your house, or perhaps not. I really do not know exactly what triggers scattered patches of frost as we will be having now. At any rate, it is a signal for rose people to begin a sequence of activity leading to peacefully sleeping, well-protected beds of roses.

First, no more feeding, especially nitrogen! However, keep up the spraying for fungi. Powdery mildew thrives in warm days and cool, damp nights, especially with increased shade in the mornings, which allows the bushes to stay damp for too long. I have found that **Fung-onil** by Bonide, available at Southern States, is an exceptionally good weapon against rust, mildew, and even blackspot. **Mancozeb** and **E-Rase** are also effective, but more expensive. I have seen a few large, hairy caterpillars on my bushes. I hate to kill them ..... don't they become butterflies? Anyway, they don't eat much. I like **Tal-Star** for late summer garden insects, but **Malathion** works as well. Also, any time now we can stop dead-heading old blossoms. I hate it, in a way, because the garden looks so "uncared-for." But, the prevailing wisdom is to allow the bushes to form hips, which requires the spent blossoms to remain. This, in turn, gives the rose bush a signal that the summer life-cycle is over and it is time to go dormant if the weather permits.

After at least two HARD freezes, usually around Thanksgiving, we can finish the fall/winter job. Briefly put — prune all your roses to about knee high, or half their current height, whichever is shortest, cut out all bad and small canes, and strip the bushes of leaves.

After that, clean the beds thoroughly. Rake out all the old mulch, leaves, etc., and dispose of it. I spray the canes and dirt one last time with a dormant winter spray and sulfur mix. At that point, the dirt is raked up in a hill around each plant, being careful to cover the bud union or graft. If the bud union is too high to cover, use extra dirt from elsewhere (even a store-bought bag) or fresh mulch to build up the hills. It goes without saying that we must

not dig too deeply in the bed and disturb or uncover the bushes' shallow feeder roots.

Now we can move on to other winter chores. Our roses shall "settle down for a long winter's nap." And, spring pruning is reduced by at least half!