

# Rose Care, the Organic Way



According to rose guru, Rayford Reddell, the author of *The Rose Bible* (©1994 by Rayford C. Reddell), alfalfa is a must for modern hybrid roses. Alfalfa, as it decomposes, yields triacontanol (a type of alcohol) which, when it reaches rose roots, stimulates 'basal breaks.' A basal break is simply a term used to describe the emergence of new stems (canes) at the base of the plant above the graft that will produce vigorous growth and abundant flowers. Rosarians love basal breaks and cut out old wood, from year to year, making room for them to grow.

Early Spring – late February or early March – is the time to apply alfalfa. Apply it out to the drip line of established plants. Then apply the recommended amount of either Organic E.B. Stone or Dr. Earth Rose and Flower Food. Cover the whole application with a nice 2-3 inches of organic compost, used as a mulch, and water it in thoroughly.

Mid-Summer – Late July or Early August – an additional application of E.B. Stone or Dr. Earth Rose and Flower Food will keep your roses happy right down to their roots. Remember that roses growing in the ground like deep weekly waterings rather than frequent sprinklings.

Why switch to an organic alternative for your roses? Using organics feeds soil micro-organisms that in turn provide a steady slow supply of nutrients for plants. This results in thick cell membranes and strong, healthy growth that resists attack from insects and diseases (see Orchard Home & Garden News, March 2008, 'Foiling the Attack of the Aphids').

## Easy and Organic Alternative Rose Formula

### *For roses in the ground:*

#### Spring (late February/early March)

Mix 2 cups of Alfalfa Meal + 2 cups of Organic E.B. Stone or Dr. Earth Rose Food for each rose.

Spread under the established rose from the trunk to about 2-3 feet out (at least to the drip line) then apply 2-3 inches of organic compost as a mulch on top of the fertilizer (Gold Rush, Bumper Crop, Paydirt, or homemade compost). Water in thoroughly.

#### Summer (late July/early August)

Spread 2 cups Organic E.B. Stone or Dr. Earth Rose Food for each rose (as above). Work into top 2 inches of soil and water in thoroughly.

### *For roses in containers:*

Apply in late February, early May and again in early August. Use the Spring formula at ½ the given amounts. Spread evenly over the surface of the soil in container. Mix into the top inch or 2 of soil and water in thoroughly.