



Southern California Horticultural Society – December 2020 Webinar Questions

This month, the Southern California Horticultural Society invited Steve Gerischer, owner of Larkspur Garden Design and currently sitting vice president of SCHS, to present a webinar on how to grow roses organically.

These are Steve's answers to questions we were unable to answer live.

To watch the full replay of Steve's presentation, visit <https://youtu.be/bqiOVYHuzvE>.

-
1. Regarding your chipper/shredder: I googled that term and found the price range is from \$84.00 to \$1,200. Certainly the \$84 is a waste of money but must I buy the \$1,200 one?

No need for \$\$\$ shredders to make mulch. Even a 'Leaf Eater' type of shredder-like a giant weed whacker in a barrel will work.

2. Would you fertilize on the same schedule for your container plants as your in-ground plants?

I fertilize container grown roses more often, and here is where I do consider non-organic products-the whole environment inartificial, so it isn't awful to consider.

3. Most of my roses have tight, curly new growth for the last several months and with stunted distorted flowers. Is that from too much fertilizer? no insects seen.

It might be overfertilizing, but it could be chili thrips. I hope not! Read about chili thrips, and about rose-rosette disease to make certain. So far, I have not been cursed with either.

4. Can you recommend a nursery for me to buy [roses]? I live in Simi Valley.

The closest nursery to you that I'm familiar with is Green Thumb, in Canoga Park. Otto & Sons roses and growers has a growing grounds nearby and they sometimes open to public.

5. A rosarian told me once that you should point the bud union of a rose bush toward the most amount of sun. What do you think?

I position roses to protect the bud union from strong light, the shade of its own canes offering protection from scorching.



Southern California Horticultural Society – December 2020 Webinar Questions

6. When you plant, do you have a planting recipe?

I plant with good compost/or LGM Planting mix as well as bone meal and alfalfa meal in the planting hole.

7. For old roses, if I have new canes doing well, but an old dead clump of dead canes, should I try to cut out the old clump?

Yes. On old roses cut out corky punky old growth. You can also get a stiff wire brush and rub at the graft union to dislodge bark until you see a hint of green or white wood. This scarring can lead to new canes breaking through, especially after application of alfalfa meal.

8. Like Voldemort, the name we never want to mention, have you had to deal with Chilli Thrips yet?

Chili thrips (It-who-must-not-be-named!) has never struck my garden, or the gardens I care for. I have spoken at Ventura Rose Soc. And most inland growers were battling thrips. I suspect that one must surrender to non organic methods in this case. (Or magic?)

9. What do you put in your compost?

I compost dry tree foliage/smaller sticks/weeds even seeding weeds as I'll get them regardless/kitchen vegetable waste/coffee grounds. If you use eggshells, bury them in the garden. They persist.

10. Do you pull the mulch back when you apply your compost?

Yes, pull mulch back to apply compost/fertilizer, then push back.

11. What's your favorite medium-sized yellow rose?

'Julia Child.' She liked it cause it looks 'Like butter!'

12. Thank you so much, Steve. I recently moved to Bishop. First frost in late October - when would you stop deadheading? And frosts into May, so when would you fertilize in spring? Can I still put down alfalfa meal now?

Stop deadheading 1st of Sept. (Hips don't need to redden, just start forming) Alfalfa meal can be applied any time. It needs warmth and moisture to break down, and will just sit there through colder weather.



Southern California Horticultural Society – December 2020 Webinar Questions

13. Where can I purchase bare root David Austin roses?

Bare root Austins are hard to come by. Occasionally at nurseries in Jan. Mail order possibly (Direct from D. Austin in Texas possibly) Older var. Austin no longer carries are sometimes sold through antique rose retailers.

14. My roses are in full bloom now. Shall I wait until they die to prune them?

You can, but you may need to take in a bunch of cut flowers eventually if they persist. Better to prune than to wait.

15. What are your favorite plants to grow amongst the roses?

I like Alströmmeria (smaller new hybrids.) bulbs and true geraniums most (G. 'Biokovo' hard to beat).

16. What companion plants do you recommend for roses?

See above.

17. Can we get Steve's email address to find out more info about the chipper/shredder?

sglarkspur@aol.com

18. For container roses, do you re-pot after 5 years?

Yes, just post pruning. Knock off as much old 'soil' as possible. Re-pot in compost or planting mix + potting soil. 50/50.

19. I've heard alfalfa pellets work from big feed stores like red barn. What do you think?

NO!!! Alfalfa pellets have corn syrup in them and will form mats of moldy ick. (Scott Daigre of Tomatomania warned me years ago-he did it and had to peel them out of a client's garden.)

20. How do you treat rust? I have been organic gardening for 30 years and it is generally great, but spring (I am in WeHo) the June Gloom is a difficult time.

I just remove affected foliage the minute I see it start. Spray with mild vinegar and water solution under leaves. Keep old foliage removed from the soil surface. Spray the vinegar (or Neem oil) on the soil surface.