

BEA GROW'S ROSE ADVICE:

Bea Grow was a legend in the Orange County garden circles. She was a lifelong gardener in San Clemente who remembered more than most of us and was a member of at least six garden clubs.

You could ask her about an iris and she will rattle off its history, cultivation, and perhaps the performance of a particular cultivar back in, say 1966, which was a not a good year for iris, except if you had planted them in high ground with sandy soil and drenched them with something mysterious like seaweed. But then, those in partial shade did just fine in 1967 if you take into account it rained a lot that year.

Bea Grow was a well known gardener in Orange County. She had an extensive garden with many heirloom perennials including English roses."

January

Bea vigorously pruned all her roses in January. "They bloom better on new growth," she said. She conditioned the soil with **1 tablespoon soil sulfur, 1 cup gypsum, 1 tablespoon of iron, and 1 tablespoon of Epsom salts per rose, sprinkling the dry ingredients on top of the soil.**

"I never disturb the soil around my roses by digging around them," she says. "It makes the weeds pop up."

She topped off her soil conditioner with 3-inches of homemade compost. Then, everything gets watered in.

February

Since Bea didn't want all of her roses to bloom at the same time, **she waited until February to prune and condition some of her roses so they would bloom a few weeks later in the season.**

March

Bea was an organic gardener. As her roses began to leaf out with new red growth, she mixed up a wheelbarrow full of compost with **4 cups of alfalfa meal, and 4 cups of kelp meal, a handful of bone meal and blood meal each, and used the mix to mulch her roses again.**

April

Bea's roses are beginning to blossom now. On most days, she watered her roses by hand, but every now and then she'd get out a 2-gallon bucket and bathe them with seaweed extract and fish emulsion, as directed on the packet. She'd also use this liquid mixture to water her potted plants.

"I enjoy watering by hand with the hose," she remarked. "That way, I'll be able to keep track of what's going on with my plants."

May

Bea's roses are really blooming. Not incidentally, they are also bug-and disease-free. "When you mulch roses, you have very few problems with disease," she says. **Let your roses rest.**

June

By June, Bea's old-fashioned and heirloom roses are blooming. **She deadheaded faded flowers and lightly pruned all other roses for shape.**

July

Bea kept deadheading faded flowers, continued to hand water her plants and kept watch for problems. Rust and mildew get washed off with plain water and diseased leaves are picked up and thrown in the trash.

August

Bea pruned her roses back a little more vigorously in August and began another round of feeding with the **January mix of sulfur, iron, gypsum, and Epsom salts, followed with compost to prompt another round of blooms by the holidays.**

September

Since Bea gardened organically, she fed a bit more often than gardeners who use chemicals. "Plants are like us, they benefit more from a moderate amount of food all of the time, as opposed to a few big doses just a few times a year." **In September repeat what you did in April.**

October - November

Bea let her roses be. Some will sit it out for the rest of the season, others will begin to bloom again by the holidays.

December

Bea took the month off, storing energy for the big round of rose care that begins in January.

A note on ingredients: Bea gets all of her rose growing ingredients at the Orange County Farm Supply in Orange.

