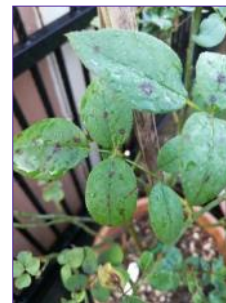


# HOME GARDEN

BY WAN NOORLI  
RAZALI

## Rosa (Part 2)

In the previous issue, we have discussed the types of roses and basic tips when buying a new rose plant. Now, the plant that you have planted will be about three weeks old. What should we do next? We need to ensure the soil is added with organic matter from time to time. This is to ensure that there are sufficient nutrients to encourage the plant's development. I personally use fish's innards or belly, banana peels, and eggshells to enrich the soil once a month.



The fish belly should be rinsed with water to reduce the blood as it can invite ants and other unwelcome pests. After rinsing, take a spoonful of the fish belly, mixed with a bit of banana peel cut and crushed eggshell, buried about 3 inches deep, away from the main stem. You must be careful not to damage the root while doing this.

Black spots are caused by a fungus infection; it does not kill the plant directly but weakens the plant and makes it vulnerable to other threats. The area near the black spot usually becomes yellow and the leaves will start to fall. Once infected, the stem will start becoming yellow, and later develop lesions that are brown to black. This is due to excessive exposure to water, more than seven hours due to heavy rain or overwatering. The lesions can worsen and kill the plant from the bottom upward. This is known as a canker, as shown below.



*Fish belly, eggshells, and banana peels are ideal as rose plant fertilisers.*

Should you find it difficult to get these, you can also choose to get a ready-made rose fertiliser.



What else to be aware of? Roses are not free from threats. They can be vulnerable to certain conditions, diseases, and insects. Let us look at a few most common ones in Malaysia. Let us start with black spots (in the picture below).

How to deal with this? The most effective prompt measure is the removal of all black spot infected leaves on the plant, branch, or even those fallen on the ground near the stem. This is to stop the fungus from spreading. Next, ensure that the area is dry. Do not water the plant if it rains. And if possible,

*continued on the next page ...*



# HOME GARDEN

BY WAN NOORLI  
RAZALI

... continued from the previous page

move the pot under a shade to prevent it from being continuously exposed to the heavy rain. Therefore, most people grow roses in the greenhouse. You can also use fungicidal sprays on the affected leaves and stem area. If a canker develops, the affected stem should be removed immediately by cutting them. Ensure that the cut area is not exposed to water by applying a thin layer of plant glue. If it affected the main stem from the bottom, I am sorry, but you must bid goodbye to the plant. It is sad, but remember, we cannot decide which plant lives, and which dies. I have lost more than 30 rose plants due to canker throughout my rose planting experience. And in fact, I just lost one yesterday at the time of writing. I looked at it and said, "thank you for giving me beautiful fragrant flowers in the past 6 years".

Apart from these, we may also face the threat of thrips. This tiny insect is hard to be detected, but its attack is visible. It causes damage by sucking out the plant cell liquids. It leaves streaks, silvery speckling, and small white patches on the leaves while the buds may look stunted or darkened prematurely.



*The crippled leaves due to thrips attack*

To deal with thrips, you can lightly spray the affected plant with water-based mosquito spray. Leave it for 15 minutes and rinse back by watering the

plant. If you wish to go natural, you may use neem oil spray or even the water from blended onion, chilies, and garlic. The pungent smell from the water may drive the insects away but it needs to be repeated as the smell may be temporary.

So, is it tough to take care of roses? Some people might say no, but others may think that it is fussy. Well, it all depends. If you wish to minimise all the risks, you may want to plant them in a greenhouse or under a transparent shade.

As much as we wish to be positive, bear in mind that rose varieties mostly originated from the 4-season countries where they thrive extremely well. When forced to adapt to a different country like ours, though it can flower with proper care, it may differ from those grown back in its original home in terms of size and resistance. Colder temperature is an advantage, but it should not be overwatered as this invites fungal infection and spots.

Never be greedy. I once pictured myself in a garden full of roses. I have purchased more than 200 varieties since 2012. Now, I am left with a few. It is not how many species or pots you have but how many quality ones that strive for years in your care.

