

## **Winterizing Your Rose Garden**

**By Kent Campbell, BGRS Consulting Rosarian**

We've had that two hard freezes we talk about, so I think it is good to take advantage of the warmer days we may have, and cut back on bushes. I know that mine will be relieved to be rid of the powdery mildew that has hit some of my beds quite hard.

After cutting back by at least half, and taking out bad canes (small, crooked, and criss-crossing ones), strip the remaining canes of their leaves. Then it's very important to clean the bed thoroughly. For me, that means to dispose of all the summer's mulch. I use alfalfa hay so it is easy to do. If you are using expensive chips of some sort, that may be a bit harder to do, even unnecessary. The point is to get the area clean of all old leaves.

Next spray the beds and rose canes thoroughly. I use an old-fashioned Lime-Sulfur spray which, in my opinion, is too harsh to use on roses when in full foliage. Ingredients are those in its title and the label states that the spray is effective as a fungicide, miticide, and insecticide. The main point is that it is long-lasting. The brand is **Hi-Yield** and it is available in most garden shops.

At this point, a little dirt can be raked up around the main stem of the plant, but you can't go very deep! New dirt and sand from somewhere else, including bags from Lowes, can be used. A sandy mix falls away from the plant much more easily in the spring when going through that chore.

Piling another mulch around the roots is also desirable. Pine needle hay works, as do grass clippings. Field hay is a no-no! It is loaded with grass seed. Tree leaves are also a problem as they tend to congeal into sticky masses as they wet and rot.