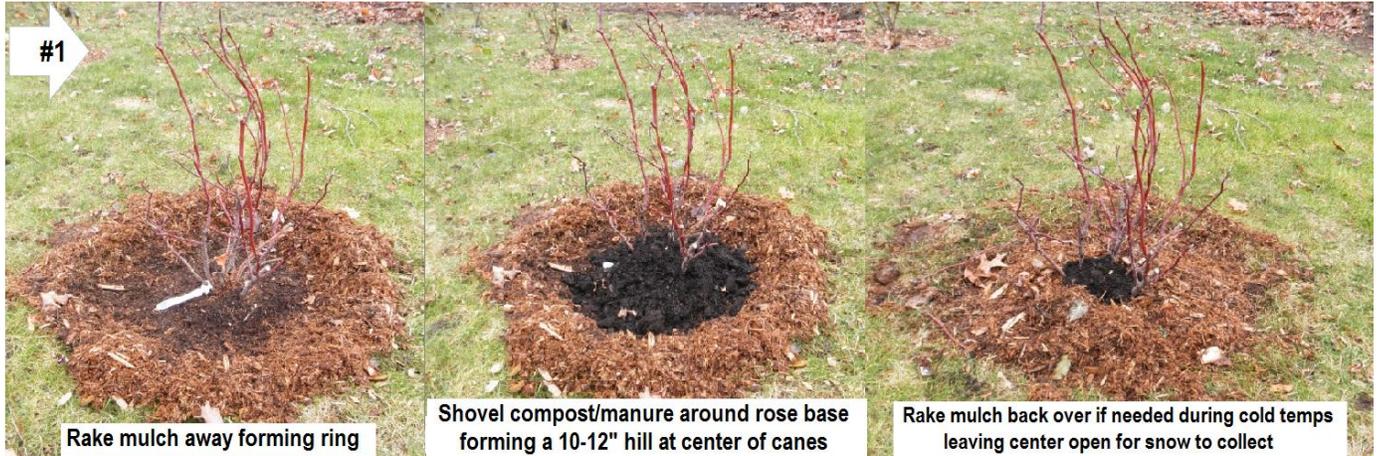


# Overwintering Roses *Just like Shrubs*



#1

Rake mulch away forming ring

Shovel compost/manure around rose base forming a 10-12" hill at center of canes

Rake mulch back over if needed during cold temps leaving center open for snow to collect

Once the ground begins to freeze following several days of overnight hard freezes, it's time to overwinter my roses. Living in Zone 6b, many of my roses are quite hardy and depending on the winter forecast, I may do little or nothing other than spraying sulfur/lime/dormant oil. If the forecast for the winter season calls for cold temps, I apply technique #1 to my roses, the same way I overwinter newly planted shrubs over their first few winters. Same rationale applies – protect plant roots - keep surrounding soil from freezing/thawing/refreezing cycles and avoid the plant from waking up to frigid conditions that damage and kill.

Not all roses are the same, neither are the gardens in which they grow. The same rose can respond very differently in the same Zone and even in the same garden depending where it's planted – facing west or south. So I've adapted my overwintering technique to accommodate the extra levels of protection my roses may need. And, that varies from winter to winter and even rose to rose.



#2

Same as Technique #1 - Rake mulch forming ring & add compost/manure around rose base forming 10-12" hill at center of canes

Form a cage around rose anchoring with bamboo stake to keep steady

Fill cage with mulched leaves compacting them down and around rose canes

Some of my Hybrid Teas and garden roses need a little extra – maybe Japanese beetles or black spot or powdery mildew got to them and the rose didn't have a chance to bounce back and harden moving to dormancy or maybe were fall plantings. For those roses and others maybe not quite hardy to my Zone 6b, I came up with Technique #2, which merely adds a cage (I fashion out of plastic garden fence - a 36"

long strip to wrap around the rose). Then I fill the cage with dried mulched leaves, compacting them around the rose base as added protection, keeping the roots from freezing/thawing/refreezing.

Yet, every garden has a “special” rose or two and mine is no exception. In 2011, I rescued the most beautiful Kaiserin Auguste Viktoria from a bargain bin for \$2. Her pale green and white cane forcing itself from the top of the plastic wrapper of the dried out bare root tube caught my eye. I thought any rose with a will to grow that strong, is a rose for me – who looked at the USDA zone!

An early Hybrid Tea carrying  $\frac{3}{4}$  lineage to the Teas and only  $\frac{1}{4}$  lineage to the Hybrid Perpetual, Viktoria acts more like a Tea than a modern Hybrid Tea and really not well suited for northern zones. In 2011 season, she grew to 4', reblooming delicate white petals that are heavenly fragranced – a real beauty. But 2011 winter was very mild for Zone 6b and Viktoria pulled through with flying colors protected by Technique #2. Did I mention this rose is hardy *maybe* in Zones 7b- 10? Our 2012 winter forecast calls for a cold, snow and blistery wind; Viktoria will need extra special treatment to survive.



#3  
Rake mulch into ring, add compost/manure forming a 10-12" hill & gather up canes and tie with twine

Form cage around rose - two 22" sections used - total 44" height

Fill cage with mulched leaves compacting around tied canes

Even some of my “hardy” roses suffer cane loss over the occasional severe winter. Because my roses are planted in the lawn, I don’t want to dig trenches and tip them over. So again I’ve adapted my overwintering approach as Technique #3 in adding additional protection during severe winters with greater height of caged leaves to protect the full length of canes that have also been bundled with twine. See Technique #3 above. But for Viktoria this winter, only time will tell, I’m hopeful...

As spring unfolds and temps begin to warm, I merely begin removing the layers in reverse order applied. I first remove the leaf filled cages, allowing leaves to naturally fall away from rose. As the temps begin to warm mid-April and hard blistery freezes give way to thawing earth, I rake the remaining leaves completely away and allow spring rains to melt the compost/manure hills. The compost/manure and spring rains provide a rich first feeding for each rose, on their own schedule, as they each begin to awaken to the new growing season. Depending on the volume of mulched leaves I’m raking away, I often spread them about the yard to decompose adding Nitrogen into the awakening grass. Eventually early May, I’ll rake the compost/manure level and apply slow release fertilizer, then cover with a fresh layer of mulch. Tearing down overwinter technique like this offers a real bonus of easy spring chores. So if you feel your roses need a little “extra” this year, give my approach a try!