

Oh, Hail – What To Do Now

By Joan Franson, Master Consulting Rosarian

There is nothing that feels more devastating to a gardener's heart than hail. While it is hailing, after it has hailed or when starting out to help the bushes to recover – hail hurts. First I suggest you do nothing. The next day, perhaps only cut off anything that is dangling and not fully connected to the lower stem

After a few days, review each bush to see if minor pruning will be needed to prune back to a healthy bud eye. I definitely do not recommend intensive pruning immediately to remove *all* damage seen on all stems. It is surprising how many of the stems can continue growing and producing blooms for the rest of this growing season even though there are bruises showing on the outer skin of the stems. This allows the bush to function this growing season and continue to build storage in the lower stems and roots.

If much of the foliage is damaged, I try to use a scissors to prune off the tips of leaflets or entire leaflets which are dangling and not fully connected. I don't see how they can continue to do photosynthesis with any beneficial results if the vein connection is not complete.

It is soon enough to prune back to eliminate most bruised stems next spring when doing the early season pruning.

After the bush has been through the hail a few days, it may be wise to do a spraying of a general fungicide to help prevent any disease from gaining a stronghold on the injured bushes.

Then keeping in mind that this year with this hard hail coming in mid to late July, fall is approaching, there is time to do an organic fertilizing of the bushes to help strengthen them to meet the fall season of growth. The bush is in shock and the first thing it does *not* need is a quick dose of fertilizer. Organic fertilizing is slower in its reaction and won't come with as big a shock to the plant. As usual, do no granular ground surface fertilizing after the middle of August. Foliar feeding is fine and may be timely to help the bushes make it through.

On watering, remember if there is less overall foliage on the plant, it will require less watering than usual but will need some moisture to continue good growth.