

Best Fertilizer for Desert Rose

Desert roses overall need a very light amount of fertilizer. The thing we should keep in mind is when should we fertilize our babies, what & how often to feed them. It also depends on whether or not you have pruned your desert roses or whether your babies are grafted ones.

Come on along & let's check out some ideas together.

For Very Young Desert Roses

For young babies that are only 2 weeks old, we usually don't feed them with any fertilizer. This ensures their young roots are not being burned or fried up by too much nutrients in the soil.

If you want the plants to grow faster, try [Osmocote](#). Some Thai Adenium nurseries use this stuff when planting Thai Soco adenium seeds to boost growth.

Normally, when the adenium grow a little bit older (about 3 weeks old), we may use a secret feed that some growers have shared.

The Sulfur Secret

For desert roses about 3 weeks old, some growers sprinkle sulfur on the soil & water them. From their experience, this has helped the plants grow strong & faster.

[Sulfur](#) helps make the soil more acidic for acid-loving plants like adenium. It also strengthens the plants immune system. If you can't find sulfur around your local area, try epsom salt (MgSO₄). This material contains sulfur & magnesium which is good for leaf growth.

Bigger Leaves Growing

During the growing stages, desert roses actually need more water, more nutrients, more sunlight. Basically, more everything to push out those beautiful flowers. It's like a teenager reaching puberty.

When the plants are growing bigger leaves, we would mist them more & pour some root powder to stimulate more root growth. At this stage, we try to add more of the Nitrogen (aka the 'protein') amount. The focus is on developing strong, multiple branches first. Then we can focus on flowers later.

Desert roses are also huge foliage feeders. They devour the good bits like a child munches candy. You can combine foliage sprayers like fish emulsion/seaweed twice a week & slow-release fertilizer (high in Nitrogen) in the soil at this stage.

Also, during the active growing season, you may want to repot the plant into a bigger pot. Adenium need ample space to grow its root. When potted in a tight space, even with generous feeding and watering, the plants may grow slower. So timing it this way, take this opportunity (during active growing season, repot aden into bigger space) to ramp it up to another level.

Nutrient Absorption Through Adenium Leaves

There's still some ongoing discussion about the ability to absorb nutrients through leaves of adenium. Some growers believe this leaves-feeding route takes longer as the absorption rate is lower. The direct method of pouring the nutes into the soil for the roots to uptake is thus quicker & more effective.

Some other growers believe that we're just not feeding our babies enough through the leaves. It is devouring all the nutes we put in too quickly. And that may be why we're not seeing a lot of growth when doing it this way.

In any case, remember at this growing stage we're trying to build some muscles, so add some more Nitrogen.

And as our plants grow up:

Small Buds & Flowers Forming

When small buds & flowers are about to form, we increase the P & K amount. Phosphorous (P) helps the promote bud growth & helps the plants flower evenly on the branches. Potassium (K) is a metal ion element. It helps make the color of desert roses more vibrant and keep them on for a longer time.

Here you can choose a fertilizer that is high in P, K like 6-30-30. A fertilizer that contains other micro-nutrients like Cu (Copper), Zn (Zinc), Fe (Iron), Mg (Magnesium) is also beneficial.

Misting the leaves with fish emulsion or seaweed also helps nurture the bud growth. Here, we use a more diluted solution so the high amount of nutrients doesn't burn our little buds. Water daily using well-draining growing medium when flowers are blooming.

We can feed every 2-3 weeks before blooming. As they are flowering, we reduce the amount & just let the plants enjoy the good food.

And as the cycle goes on:

A Desert Rose Life Cycle

Observing the life cycle of your desert roses can help you feed them most effectively. The problem many growers have when feeding is what some growers call a zero response from the plants.

Some call this unresponsiveness, sleeping roots or just resistance. What it is is that they don't see much growth no matter how much more food they feed the plants. It's just not taking in anymore. This could lead to the attraction of fungi, which could lead to root rot in some cases. Some growers overfeed their plants.

The best time to feed your babies is when it's shooting the branches up strongly & after it has used all the energy for flower & seed pod creation. This is when they are most hungry & craving the food and water for a new cycle.

When it's flowering, we balance out nutrients. At this point, the good P, K & other bits are being transported up to produce flowers. Not too much more is needed.

Observe carefully if you need to add some. Dilute the nutrients so the roots won't get burned (high concentration of nutrients may heat up the plant bodies like a human body).

Time	Food	Purpose/Do
Very young	Sulfur	Strengthen young adenium
Growing	Nitrogen	Build branches, caudex & roots
Before flowering	P, K	Create lots of bright flowers
After flowering	Less water	Cut off branches, dry & rest for 2-3 weeks
Recovery	Vitamin B1, N	Supplement for the plants after hard work
New cycle	Repeat	Repeat

[https://files.zenyrgarden.com/Images/Adenium%20Desert%20Rose%20Blog/Post%20\(19\)/adenium-life-cycle.jpg](https://files.zenyrgarden.com/Images/Adenium%20Desert%20Rose%20Blog/Post%20(19)/adenium-life-cycle.jpg)

Some notes:

For the first 5 years, the adenium will grow very vigorously. Just let it eat & drink happily. After that point, the growth may plateau & slow down a little bit. You may need to 'rejuvenate' the old adenium if it's not liking the food it eats.

Below is the growth of the adenium called Endless Sunset:

[https://files.zenyrgarden.com/Images/Adenium%20Desert%20Rose%20Blog/Post%20\(19\)/adenium-endless-sunset-growth-eight-years.jpg](https://files.zenyrgarden.com/Images/Adenium%20Desert%20Rose%20Blog/Post%20(19)/adenium-endless-sunset-growth-eight-years.jpg)

The one you see on the right is 8 years older than the one on the left. And it attained most of its growth and shape during the first few years.

The younger one stands 5 feet/ 1.5 m above the 18 inch/45 cm pot. And the second one stands 7 feet/2.1m above the 30 inch/76 cm pot. It grew 2 feet /0.6m in height during the preceding eight years with lots of stem thickening.

Some Notes

Misting water may be easier for the plants to absorb. Because the water particles are split smaller. A strong down-pour of water may wash away some nutrients that are already present in the soil & compact the potting mix.

The feeding can be spaced out 2-3 weeks apart. This is the average time to know that our nutrients have been successfully "delivered", digested and transformed by the inside part of the plants.

It also depends on whether you're using a well-draining medium or a moisture-retaining medium. Feeding can be about 150-250 grams per liter or 5-8 oz per 4 cups of water.

If we feed the adenium naturally following their natural growth cycle, the plants will grow up steadily & strong. We lessen the risk of zero-response desert roses or any interruptions during its growth cycle. Chemical fertilizers may not be needed as the desert rose grows powerfully in its natural way.

3 Whens to Fertilize and Whens Not to Fertilize

After Drying Adenium

After you dry the adenium (for root training, caudex training or treating root rot), you can replant the plant into new soil and watch for the little string roots to come out:

[https://files.zenyrgarden.com/Images/Adenium%20Desert%20Rose%20Blog/Post%20\(19\)/adenium-after-drying-fertilizer-timing.jpg](https://files.zenyrgarden.com/Images/Adenium%20Desert%20Rose%20Blog/Post%20(19)/adenium-after-drying-fertilizer-timing.jpg)

If we fertilize the plant early, when the little roots haven't sprouted out and are strong yet, the extra nutrients may attract other bacteria to come enjoy. After the bacteria have joined the party, when the string roots shoot out it may cause blackened and rotted root. This could thus affect our plants.

So you could wait for the little roots to come out a bit and then fertilize. This signals to us that after a long period of drying (no water no food), the plants are very hungry and craving for food now. This is a good time to feed them. Some nitrogen and vitamin B1 now could also help.

After about a week, when the roots have absorbed the new nutrients, the dried shrunk branches will harden/fatten up and begin operation as normal again.

The next time to fertilize is:

When Young Leaves Shoot Out

[https://files.zenyrgarden.com/Images/Adenium%20Desert%20Rose%20Blog/Post%20\(19\)/adenium-replacing-leaves-new-leaves-shoot.jpg](https://files.zenyrgarden.com/Images/Adenium%20Desert%20Rose%20Blog/Post%20(19)/adenium-replacing-leaves-new-leaves-shoot.jpg)

For some older adenium, they may replace old leaves year round. The old leaves may show some tint of red then go yellow and gradually fall off. In this case, when you see young new leaves budding out, it is a good time to fertilize the plant. You can see about-to-fall old leaves and the new leaves on an old adenium in the picture above.

This is the time they need some new nutrients and the food can help give a little push to the new leaf growth. It will also help the caudex and long thick stem growth. Nitrogen works well in this case.

As we have mentioned earlier, during this active growth period it is also a good time to repot your plants.

Many growers also ask: Should we supply nitrogen during flowering?

During Flowering

[https://files.zenyrgarden.com/Images/Adenium%20Desert%20Rose%20Blog/Post%20\(19\)/noble-concubine-adenium-no-fertilize-this-time.jpg](https://files.zenyrgarden.com/Images/Adenium%20Desert%20Rose%20Blog/Post%20(19)/noble-concubine-adenium-no-fertilize-this-time.jpg)

At this time, we don't feed the plants a lot of nitrogen anymore. Because a lot of nitrogen at this time may cause the plant to 'overshoot' aka flower and bud abortion.

They may sense the extra nitrogen in the soil and opportunistically abort growing flower and buds, and continue shooting up their branches instead. Flowers and buds may fall off as a result. We see this

happen in the rainy season when there's lots of free nitrogen in the air.

So when the plant is in bloom, we don't feed it more nitrogen. To make the flowers last longer, you could spray some flower nourishing solution. And that may be all that's needed at this stage for beautiful flowers.

One Common Mistake of Fertilizing Is...

Feeding your beloved plants too much. When you feed them, you can sprinkle the fert around the edge of the pot, or a bit further away from the base of the plant. And not directly around near the base.

This helps make it not too hot. The nutes get diluted more cooler as we water it down. It also stimulates the roots to grow out more to catch the bait (the fert).

Good Fertilizer Good Life

So these are some ideas to feed your adenium, plus how much, how often & what to feed them. The extreme of too much feeding results in overweight plants with weaker natural immune system or rot.

The other extreme of under-feeding is skinny adenium. Balance out the food so your plants can grow up healthy throughout different stages of their lives. Have fun growing your adenium, good luck & See you again next time!