

# Roses

## Different Types Take Different Care!

There's a rose for every situation, whether you're interested in cutting hybrid tea roses for the table, a climber to cover a sunny garage wall or shrub rose for a low-maintenance groundcover planting. Make your rose choice based on the use you have in mind and the level of maintenance you're willing to give.

All roses flower best in full sun. That means at least 6 hours of direct sunlight a day. All roses also must have good drainage, so pick a site where water isn't going to run off and stand. If you must plant in a low area, build raised beds.

### Planting

The clay soil so typical in our area is not great rose soil. Clay soil doesn't drain well, and that encourages rose roots to rot.

When planting, you'll have the best success by digging a hole that's only as deep as the pot but three to four times as wide. Improve the soil by using one-third organic matter (such as compost, Sweet Peet or bark fines) to two-thirds of the native soil.

Carefully remove the rose from the pot and check for circling roots. Gently loosen any circling or matted roots. Otherwise, disturb the roots as little as possible.

Once the rose is in the hole, backfill about two-thirds of the way with the improved soil, tamp gently, water and let drain. Then fill the rest of the way and water again.

Finally, mulch the soil with about 2 inches of organic mulch kept a few inches away from the stem so as to avoid rotting the bark. We suggest pine bark mulch or leaves.

Be sure to give your roses a deep soaking once or twice a week when it doesn't rain. That's especially important during the first season until the roots establish.

### Fertilizing

As with any planting, it's a good idea to test the soil ahead of time to determine what

fertilizer, if any, you'll need and whether the soil acidity (pH) should be adjusted. If the test suggests adjustments, organic fertilizers and lime or sulfur can be added at planting time.

After planting, most roses are fairly heavy feeders and appreciate at least two fertilizer treatments per season— one in early to mid-April and a second in June. For peak flowering, fertilize monthly from April through August.

Either scratch in a granular, such as the Plant Tone or water with one of the liquid fertilizers labeled for flowers or flowering shrubs. The fertilizer breakdown should be higher in the middle number (phosphorus), such as 5-10-5 or 15-30-15.

Roses also do very well when an inch or two of rotted manure or compost is added to the soil each fall or early spring.



### Pruning and Deadheading

Here's where the care gets trickier depending on what variety you've planted. The heaviest pruning should take place in late March or early April, just before new growth begins. For miniature roses, shear the plants back to 3 to 6 inches above ground. For shrub or landscape roses, shear bushes back up to one-third as you would for any other flowering shrub. If the plant is

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getting too dense, cut out a few of the oldest canes altogether.

For climbers, prune back side branches that bloomed last year to about 6 inches each. Remove any old canes that are no longer productive. For hybrid teas, floribundas and grandifloras, trim back branches to waist height in the fall, sometime in mid to late November. Then in spring, do the main pruning.

You have three choices with these types of roses, depending on how many blooms you want and how long you want the stems to be. Prune very lightly and you'll get a lot of smaller flowers with shorter stems. Cut out all but five to 10 canes and trim those back about half and you'll get a nice display with some long stems. For fewer but bigger flowers on long stems, cut out all but four canes and cut those back to 8 to 10 inches. When removing canes, start by getting rid of any that are skinnier than a pencil. When making pruning cuts, cut at a 45-degree angle just above outward-facing buds. The angled cut will encourage water to run off away from the bud.

Whatever the rose type, snipping off flower stems after the flowers bloom will neaten the plant and encourage reblooming. For hybrid teas, floribundas and grandifloras, the best rebloom occurs when you prune back flowered canes to just above the first stem that has five leaves instead of three.

## Spraying

Most shrub and landscape roses and many old fashioned or "antique roses" should seldom, if ever, need to be sprayed for bugs or diseases. Even many of the latest hybrids or other types have been bred for bug and disease resistance. However, roses can be prone to a variety of leaf diseases, especially black spots, powdery mildew and rust. Many fungicides are labeled for control of these and other diseases, but they are much more

effective at preventing disease than stopping it once an infection is under way.

If you've had disease problems in the past or have little tolerance for damage, start applying fungicides as soon as the leaves emerge in spring and continue applying it every two weeks. It also helps to use a preventive lime-sulfur spray in early spring just before the buds swell (normally late March to early April). Always read and follow label directions!

It's also helpful to control leaf disease by raking and removing any diseased leaves during the season. At the end of the season, also rake and remove fallen leaves. And when watering, water the ground, not the leaves. On the bug front, roses can be attacked by aphids, rose slugs, mites, Japanese beetles and thrips, to name a few. Monitor your plants for bug damage.

## Winter Protection

Dispose of dropped leaves in the fall and do not compost them. This cuts back on the spread of foliar disease. Protect the roots and bud union from cold weather when the ground freezes, which is usually January in our zone. This can be done by mounding up mulch, shredded leaves, pine needles or soil from another bed about 12 inches high on the main stem. You can also use commercial rose cones or chicken-wire cylinders stuffed with leaves. The idea is to insulate the base of the plant over winter. Just remember to remove or pull back the materials at winter's end. Tree roses or "rose standards" can be over wintered in one of two ways. If the plant is still in a pot, store it in a garage or unheated basement. Water lightly about once a month. For planted trees roses, trim the bush and dig up enough of one side of the roots so you'll be able to bend the bush over to the ground. Dig a long, shallow trench and lay the rose into it, using crossing stakes to hold it down. Then cover the whole plant with several inches of mulch or soil for the winter.