

Growing Roses

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Planting Site Roses are more resistant to pests and diseases when planted in an ideal location. Roses require at least six hours of direct sunlight for optimal flowering and growth, though full sun is preferable. An eastern exposure, which receives morning sun, is ideal for roses. Choose a planting location that is not shaded by buildings or trees to maximize the amount of sunshine the plants receive. Avoid planting roses near trees and shrubs which will compete for moisture and nutrients. Make sure the site is open to allow for air movement. Also consider water drainage to or from the planting site. Roses grow best in well-drained soil and decline with standing water around their root system.

Planting Time Roses can be planted from early spring into early fall. Spring or early summer planting allows plenty of time for good root establishment before winter, whereas planting after mid-summer may not. Bare root roses should be planted in early to mid-spring before the new shoots start to develop. Potted roses can be planted anytime from spring to early fall after danger of killing frost, usually late April to mid-May in Ohio.

Plant Selection Potted plants have a greater survival rate than bare-root plants.

Plant Preparation Potted plants require

little pre-planting attention. Keep plants watered and in a sunny location until they can be planted in the garden. Prune out any damaged, dead or broken stems before planting.

Preparing the Soil Roses thrive in a loamy, well-drained garden soil with a pH of 5.5 to 7.0. Most soils, whether clay or sandy, benefit from the addition of organic matter which improves drainage, aeration, and nutrient holding capacity. Spread a two to four inch layer of organic matter such as Complete Planting Mix on the soil surface. Organic matter sources include compost, rotted manure, leaf mold, peat moss, fine grain potting bark or other source. If planting a rose in an existing bed, dig out enough soil to form a hole approximately 15 inches deep and 18 inches wide. Mix three ounces of super-phosphate and approximately three shovelfuls of organic matter with the soil removed from the hole. This becomes the backfill soil for the new plant.

Spacing Plant spacing varies according to the growth habit of the rose plant. Plants growing too close together will be tall and spindly and produce only a few small flowers. Follow these general spacing guidelines for best results: Hybrid teas, grandifloras, floribundas 18 to 30 inches, Climbers 8 to 12 feet, Miniatures 12 to 15 inches

Planting When planting a potted plant, remove it from its container and hold it in the hole so the top of the soil ball is at ground level. A common problem is planting too deep; make sure the plant is placed at the same depth it was previously

growing in the container.

Fill the hole with the prepared soil mixture. Water the plant well with a water soluble root stimulator such as Root n Gro to allow the backfilled soil to settle around the root ball. Add more soil if necessary.

After Care Water at planting as described above, making sure the entire root mass is wet. Plants require an inch of water weekly. If rainfall is insufficient, apply water by irrigation through the first growing season to aid plant establishment. Soak the soil to a depth of 12 inches at each watering to encourage deep rooting. Do not overhead sprinkle, which encourages disease problems; water at soil level.

Mulching is recommended after planting. Apply a two-inch layer of mulch to reduce water loss from evaporation during the summer months. Mulch also increases the organic matter content of the soil, moderates soil temperature, and suppresses weed growth.

Fertilizing Because roses are heavy feeders, a routine fertilization program is important. Roses grow best in the pH range of 5.5 to 7.0. Soils testing below 5.5 will need an amendment of dolomitic lime, 7 to 8 pounds per 100 square feet. Powdered sulfur can be used to lower the pH. For soils with a pH between 7 and 7.5, add one pound of sulfur per 100 square feet. Ohio soils are often deficient in iron when the pH is above 6.5. Chelated iron products are available for foliar feeding or soil application.

It is always a good idea to amend your soil with organic matter for an added source of slow release nutrients, drainage and nutrient holding capacity. Many gardeners find the combination of organic materials and a fast release, complete, inorganic fertilizer, such as a 5-10-5, 10-10-10 or 12-12-12, works best to produce beautiful roses.

In general, roses do well with three applications per year.

Pruning Pruning is done to improve the appearance of the plant, to remove dead or diseased wood, to let in sunlight and air to the center of the plant and to control the quantity and quality of the flowers produced.

Begin pruning when growth begins in early April. The exceptions are old (heirloom) roses and some climbers that produce blooms on the previous year's wood (they should be pruned after they bloom).

Deadheading Roses Removal of spent blooms is an important summer maintenance practice. Removing the spent blooms conserves the energy the plant would use for seed production, encourages repeat flowering, and removes potential disease harboring sites. To deadhead, remove the flower by cutting back, at a 45 degree angle, to the first outward facing bud in the axil of a leaf with five leaflets.

Winter Protection There are several things you can do to make sure your roses survive Ohio winters long before the cold winds blow. First, choose the most winter hardy roses. Next, make

sure your roses are healthy and not under stress because they have a better chance of surviving winter than weak plants. Reduce stress on roses going into the dormant season by irrigating adequately in late autumn and discontinuing nitrogen application in late summer or early autumn.

Hybrid Teas, grandifloras and floribundas should be protected from winter damage after a killing frost but before the soil freezes. In Ohio, that would be late November or early December. Reduce breakage of tall canes by winter winds by cutting them back to 30 to 36 inches and tying tips together. Remove dead and fallen leaves around the plants. Use mulch, such as, wood chips, sawdust, shredded hardwood, or pine bark, instead of soil, mounded to 15 to 18 inches around the plant. Some gardeners construct wire mesh cylinders or use rose cones to surround each plant, which they fill with mulch. The danger of these methods is leaving the mulch on too long and thereby encouraging disease when temperatures begin to warm.

We do not recommend mulching Knockouts and shrub roses: as they grow from the root and not a graft, the extra protection should not be necessary, and could do more damage than good.

When severe winter weather conditions have subsided, which is typically mid-March or early April in Ohio, remove most of the mulch and soil from around the bases of plants. You may leave a 2-inch layer of mulch in the bed.

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