

PLANT LAND

GREENHOUSES • NURSERY • GARDEN CENTER

Rose Planting Guide

Site Selection: Roses need at least 6 hours or more of sun a day. A spot that is sunny all day is ideal. Good drainage is important too. The site cannot have standing water at any time of year but especially in winter and early spring. Each rose bush needs a minimum of 3' of space between it and its neighbors whether they are roses or other plants. Proper spacing helps prevent disease problems. Larger shrub roses will need even more space, depending on their final size. A shrub rose that gets to 6' will need at least 6' of space to do well. Climbing roses need sturdy support and must be tied up because they do not climb on their own.

Plant Preparation: Water your roses well when you get them home and plant them as soon as possible. Be sure they are well watered just before planting. Bareroot roses need to be kept moist until they are planted. You may leave them in a bucket of water for up to 24 hours but you must plant them as soon as possible after that.

Site Preparation: Roses prefer very rich, loamy soil with a pH of 6.5. You should always test the soil pH for roses. If you are planting a rose garden, it is better to improve the entire bed rather than each plant's area. Till soil amendments such as compost, steer manure, peat moss or shredded wood chips into the whole bed. Good drainage is very important. To check drainage, dig a hole down about 18" and fill the hole with water. If it drains in less than 5 minutes, you will need to add compost or steer manure to help the soil retain water. If it takes longer than 30 minutes to drain, you will need to add peat moss and compost to help the soil drain faster. Rocks larger than golf balls should be removed. For each individual shrub, dig a hole about 18" deep and wide. If you have not improved the whole bed, you will need to mix the soil you remove from the hole with any necessary amendments. If the soil is poor in the area where you are planting, dig a more generous hole, up to 30" deep and wide. Be sure to check drainage with the method outlined just above.

Planting Your Rose: Before planting, roses need to be taken out of ANY containers. Cardboard boxes and fiber pots will not decompose quick enough. The fiber pots such as Plant Land sells should be cut off to avoid damaging the roots. Slice down the sides and fold the pot away. Take roses out of plastic pots and loosen any roots that have grown in a circle around the pot. Prune off any broken stems or roots but do not prune any more at the time of planting. Our roses are pruned for planting when you purchase them. We suggest you add either transplant fertilizer, super phosphate, ½ cup Epson salts or ½ cup bone meal to the bottom of your planting hole. All of these promote root growth and work equally well. Mix it with the soil so that the roots do not contact it directly. Do not put growing season fertilizers on the rose at planting time.

Put enough amended soil back in the hole to hold the plant at the proper height. The bud union, the hard knot at the base of the rose, should be at ground level. (Some Montana gardeners bury the bud union about 1". You will find very good gardeners who suggest each method. We suggest that you do not bury the bud union.) Not all roses have bud unions. Plant these types to the base of the first branches. Hold the plant firmly and fill the hole with amended soil half-way up. Tamp the soil down lightly and fill the hole with water. When the water has soaked in, fill the hole with amended soil to the top. Tamp the soil around the shrub down. Water the rose deeply, flooding and allowing the water to soak down several times.

After Planting Care: Be sure the soil around your rose does not dry out. Lawn sprinkler systems do not provide enough water for newly planted shrubs. Natural rainfall will not provide enough water in most years. You will need to provide direct watering with a hose or watering can. Check a newly planted rose daily. Roses take at least one full season to get established and you will need to pay close attention to watering the first year. In future seasons, normal irrigation should be enough with the exception of very dry seasons. Roses should be with other plants that like to be kept evenly moist in soil that is never soggy and never dried out. Under watered roses will not produce many flowers. Drip irrigation is better than overhead watering for roses. If you must use overhead water, do so early in the day to allow foliage to dry quickly. Never water in the evening because doing so can encourage disease.

Pests & Diseases: Roses are susceptible to a variety of pests such as aphids, spider mites or thrips and diseases like black spot and powdery mildew. Both aphids and spider mites are visible to the naked eye. The tiny insects can range in color from black to white to orange to brown. Both can be treated with topical sprays such as Safer Yard & Garden® or systemic products such as Orthene®. Thrips are not as easy to spot. When flower buds turn brown at the edges and do not open, you have thrips. You can use systemic products or Diazinon. Pluck off the worst infected buds and dispose of them in the garbage, not the compost pile. Spray the whole plant.

Black spot is a common rose disease. Circular black spots appear on the leaves causing the leaf to eventually turn all yellow and die. Plucking off infected leaves and disposing of them away from your property is necessary to start treatment. Black spot almost always requires a fungicide such as Daconil® to control. Powdery mildew appears as a whitish powder on the leaves. It rarely kills roses but can make them unsightly. Do not pluck off infected leaves but spray them with fungicide. Powdery mildew is usually a sign of too much water on the foliage. Montana's hot days and cool nights provide excellent conditions for powdery mildew so preventative application of systemic fungicide such as Green Light® brand is always recommended.

You should check your plants throughout the growing season to identify and treat any problems that occur promptly. Plant Land can provide help identifying problems and suggesting treatments.

Many gardeners use products as preventatives and apply both insecticides and fungicides on a regular schedule. This can be a helpful practice. *Systemic* products make the plant toxic to the pest or disease. There are combined systemic pesticides and fungicides available. *Topical* applications work better to treat a specific problem when it is present. You may need to use a combination of both types for roses.

Keeping the area clean of debris, removing spent flowers and clearing out infected or dead leaves helps a great deal to keep problems from occurring and spreading. In addition, some newer rose varieties are less susceptible to disease and we can help you find those selections in our nursery.

Fertilizing: There are probably more products specifically labeled for roses than for any other plant. You can but need not buy these special mixes. All they really are is bloom boost fertilizers labeled for roses. Any fertilizer product that is even such as 16-16-16 (sometimes called 'triple 16') or any fertilizer that has a higher second number such as 10-15-10 will be just fine. Fertilize with these slow release types in early spring and again in early July but no later. If you prefer water soluble fertilizers, use them every time you water at about half strength or every two weeks at full strength. Stop using water soluble fertilizers in mid August. There are also granular rose foods that are combined with systemic insecticides and we do recommend these products. Stop using these products about the end of July but do be ready to use just systemic insecticide in needed. Note that these products do not protect against foliage fungus diseases.

Pruning: Roses have specific pruning needs. In spring, be patient with your roses and do not prune until new growth begins to emerge. For hybrid teas, grandifloras and floribundas, start by cutting out all dead branches. You may cut off ends of branches to remove partial winter kill. Then remove all crossed and weak branches. Weak branches are those of slight diameter compared to others on the shrub. Leave only the most vigorous 5-7 canes, cutting them back finally to 18". During the growing season, remove faded flowers or cut flowers for show by cutting back to at least the first five leaflet group below the flower. Then prune to ¼" above an outward facing bud. Remove damaged branches whenever they happen.

Climbing roses often flower on the previous year's growth (called 'old wood'). In April, prune out any main canes that were unproductive the previous year. On the remaining canes, prune lateral branches back to 6". Some climbers produce on new wood or a combination of both. These types can be pruned down to about 30" each fall or spring. It is very important to be able to identify what variety of climber you have before you prune it.

Shrub roses need only to have about one third of their canes removed each March. Remove any weak or dead canes first. The remaining canes can be trimmed slightly. Take about one third of the length off. Old neglected shrub roses may need one hard pruning to rejuvenate them. They can be cut nearly to the ground in spring and allowed to form a new structure that will need less severe pruning the following seasons. Miniature roses typically need only a light pruning for shape in late spring. Most roses grown in the valley require protection in winter. Hardy shrub roses (rugosas) are the only ones that do not need protection anywhere in the valley. See the Winter Care Tips sheet for further information.