

ROSES ROSES ROSES

Gertrude Stein's refrain "a rose is a rose is a rose" emphasizes the uniqueness of the rose. Books, poems, and gardens have been dedicated to them, artists depict them, perfumers mimic them, and lovers embrace them. Since 1986 the rose has been our National Floral Emblem. And they adorn many of our gardens with the same fantasy of colors and richness of fragrances. Yet the exalted position of the rose in our lives is probably exceeded only by the paucity of occurrence in our gardens. Why?

The rose has been unfairly tainted with a reputation of being difficult to grow. There is no secret formula needed to grow beautiful roses in the Washington, D.C. area. They require only proper planting, pruning, fertilizing and control of certain pests such as blackspot, mildew and spider mites. You can grow beautiful roses in literally only a few minutes a week.

Selecting Roses:

First decide how the roses are to be used in the garden. As a boundary? Along a wall? Over an arbor? On a trellis? Specimen? As a cutting garden? Exhibitions? Is spraying for disease acceptable? Is fragrance important?

All roses fall into three groupings: *Species Roses*, *Old Garden Roses (OGR's)* or *Modern Roses*. *Species Roses* are the origin of all other roses and existed before man. Next are the *OGR's* which belong to classes that existed before 1867. There are 22 OGR classes, each with distinctive features. The beauty of OGR's often lies in their outstanding fragrance. The era of the *Modern Rose* started in 1867 with the introduction of the first hybrid tea, La France, representing a new breed of flower forms and growth habits. The most popular classes of *Modern Roses* include: **Hybrid Teas** which tend to grow upright and often have one bloom per stem, similar to florist roses; **Floribundas** which tend to have flowers that grow in clusters on lower growing, mound shaped bushes; **Grandifloras** which combine the characteristics of Hybrid Teas and Floribundas; **Climbers** which have long canes that normally need tying to some structure for support; **Miniatures** (and **Mini-floras**) which are normally dwarf bushes that produce small roses in great numbers; and **Shrubs** which include English

Roses. See the companion brochures for help in selecting the best roses for any situation.

Planting:

Pick a site that has at least 6 hours of sun, preferably morning sun, well away from trees and large shrubs to avoid interfering roots. Check how well the soil drains by digging a hole about 18 inches deep. Fill the hole with water twice and let it drain. The second time measure how long it takes the water level to lower 6 inches. Two hours or less is good. Raised beds are sometimes used to correct drainage problems.

Prepare your bed or planting area in advance by amending the existing clay soil with composted organic material such as compost, leaf mold, peat moss, Com-Pro, Pro-Mix or whatever you can get easily. A good formula is about 2 parts original clay soil, 1 part peat moss, 1 part Perlite, 1 part finely shredded pine bark, and 1/2 cup lime (to raise pH to 6.5). Optionally, it is beneficial to add 2 cups green sand (soil conditioner, potash & minors), 1 cup bone meal (phosphorus), 3 cups Milorganite (iron), 1 cup Epsom salts (magnesium), 2 cups of gypsum (to break up the clay) and 20 pounds (about 4 heaping shovels) of composted cow manure. Dig or roto-till this mixture and let it sit over winter. This will make spring planting simple.

Rose bushes are usually sold either as bare root or potted. In either case purchase first quality (#1 grade) bushes from reputable nurseries. When planting potted plants dig a hole in the previously prepared area just deep enough to position the bud union at about the soil surface level in the northern Virginia area, perhaps slightly below in the north westerly areas and slightly above in the south easterly areas. Scratch 4 tablespoons of superphosphate (or 2 tablespoons of triple superphosphate) into the bottom of the hole. Remove the root ball from the pot and place in the hole, being careful not to separate the roots from the soil. Backfill with a premium nursery grade potting mix - watering as you go - up to the surface level. Tamp this down to remove any air pockets. Use the original soil excavated from the hole to form a shallow basin around the bush to retain water. Water well again. Cover the exposed bush with a box, large pot or equivalent to shade

the canes from the sun for about 2 weeks until established.

Bare root rose bushes are normally shipped in the spring in time to be planted immediately. These should be unpacked and planted as soon as possible. Start by soaking the roots in a clean trash can filled with water for at least several hours or preferably overnight. As an option you may add about 1 tablespoon of Miracle-Gro to each 5 gallons of water. On planting day remove one bush at a time from the soaking container and dip the roots and then the canes in a 10% chlorine solution for 30 seconds each, to kill any Downy mildew and other fungal diseases. Place the bush on a dry surface just long enough to dry before planting. Dig a hole in the previously prepared area deep enough to accommodate the roots, scratch in superphosphate as was done for potted roses and construct a cone in the hole using a dampened potting mix. When planting, place the roots over the prepared cone so that the bud union is close to the soil surface. Back fill with a potting mix as previously with potted roses and water generously to settle the potting mix around the roots. Gently adjust the bud union until even with the surface, as the backfill is gently tapped down to remove any air pockets from the roots. Water again and shade the newly planted bush to protect from the sun as above.

Another alternative, is to temporarily plant bare root plants in pots so they can be moved inside in case of a late frost, and planted as a potted plant after any danger of frost.

Do not fertilize newly planted rose bushes until after the first bloom cycle, and then at half the rate discussed below.

Pruning:

Pruning is necessary to maintain the health of rose bushes and promote vigorous flowering. Use sharp, clean pruning shears of the scissors type. Spring pruning begins about the time new growth buds begin to swell (when the forsythia is in bloom). First remove all dead and diseased canes leaving at least 3 to 4 healthy canes. Next remove all twiggy growth (diameter smaller than a pencil). Finally cut back the remaining healthy canes by about one-third. Pruning cuts on the healthy canes are made below any diseased wood and about 1/4

inch above a live bud eye (the starting point of new flower stems). The cut should reveal a healthy cane (creamy white pith in center). Floribundas should be more lightly pruned, and miniatures more heavily cut.

Spraying:

Most roses will benefit from a sensible preventative spray program. A fungicide should be applied every 7 to 10 days in the spring and autumn, and every 14 days in the summer. *Bayer Disease Control in Roses, Funginex, Immunox* and *Banner Maxx* are all excellent systemic fungicides. Combining any of these chemicals with *Mancozeb*, a contact fungicide is also excellent, as this will reduce the possibility of developing resistant strains of fungi. Sucking and chewing insects can be controlled by *Merit*. Mites are controlled by forced washing of the undersides of foliage periodically or with a miticide such as *Avid*. *Bayer Advanced 3 in 1 Insect, Disease and Mites* controls all of the above. Remember, do not spray in the heat of the day, wear protective clothing, always water deeply the day before spraying, and always dilute chemicals according to label instructions.

Fertilizing:

Chose either: **Alt.#1:** After spring pruning apply 1½ cups of Osmocote (8 or 9 month duration) around the drip line of each bush, or; **Alt.#2:** Mid March, ¼ cup granular 10-10-10 fertilizer per bush, mid May scratch in 3 cups of Espoma Rose-tone or Mills Magic Mix around the drip line of each bush, repeat mid June and mid August. All amounts are for an average size rose; double the amounts for climbers and large shrubs and one quarter for minis and minifloras. Always water every feeding into the soil.

Watering:

Roses require at least 1 inch of water every week during the growing season and 2 inches during the hot summer months. For a normal sized bush 2 inches requires 9 gallons per bush, applied as 4 to 5 gallons twice a week.

Growing roses takes a little effort, but no other flower pays you back with such incredible beauty.

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Consulting Rosarians (CRs) are certified by **THE AMERICAN ROSE SOCIETY** after successfully demonstrating expert knowledge on rose culture. A select few rosarians who have been CRs for at least 10 years and provided outstanding service to others, have been elevated to the status of Master Consulting Rosarian (M). All are available free of charge to assist and advise on rose culture and problems, help anyone start new rose gardens and in every way share their knowledge with others. You may feel free to call upon them with questions or for assistance.

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