

ROSE CARE

CHOOSING A SITE TO PLANT:

Roses should be planted in an area with good air circulation and drainage. Find an area with six or more hours of direct sun, with minimal competition with tree roots.

PREPARING THE PLANTING SITE:

The ideal soil mix has a good level of nutrient content. Work in peat moss, compost, manure, etc, to create a 1:3 ratio (1 part new soil, 3 parts native soil).

Recommended soil pH is 6.5. Consult a professional to test and recommend soil amendments.

PLANTING:

Most roses prefer space, typically 30 inches center to center, or more. Some shrub roses can be a bit closer to create tighter hedges. Climbing roses should be planted around 8 feet apart.

Grafted roses should be planted deeper into the ground, so the bud union (the wide area where roots and stem meet) is 1-2 inches below grade in the bed area. This helps reduce winter kill in cold climates.

Roses that are own-root (not grafted) can be planted with the top of the rootball level with the soil surface or a little above to allow for settling.

The planting hole should be 1 1/2 to 2 times the width of the rootball. After placing the rootball, fill the hole back in with the amended soil mix. Water the area until saturated and apply 1-2 inches of mulch. Do not cover the stem with mulch.

WATERING:

Roses should receive one inch of water, 1-2 times per week in hot weather. Water or check 2-3 times per week for the first couple of month after planting.

Water at the base of the plant, avoiding moisture on the leaves. Morning watering is preferred because the water can soak into the soil before the sun can evaporate it. Also, leaves have a chance to dry off with the sun, preventing mildew and fungus growth on the leaves. Roses do not like to sit wet at night and evening watering can cause root rot.

Continue watering until the ground freezes (usually in November) or until the leaves are totally off the plant.

FERTILIZING:

Roses should be fertilized three times a year. Use an all purpose fertilizer or rose specific food, typically a 5-5-5 or 5-10-5 nutrient combination. Granular fertilizer lasts longer than liquid in both the soil and in the plant.

The first fertilizer application is at planting or just as the leaf buds begin to expand. The second application is as the flower buds begin to open. The third application is when the first blossoms are tapering off. Do not fertilize after late July in order to allow new growth to harden off for winter.

Knock Out and Drift roses, as well as some climbers that have significant yearly growth, may benefit from monthly fertilizing from late April to late July.

PRUNING:

Prune in the spring, before the leaf buds open. When you see Forsythia starting to show yellow, prune your roses.

For all roses, trim out any dead or damaged branches from the winter and prune to shape. Any suckers coming up from the root can be removed, as well as any crossed branches. Prune roses down to 12-25 inches high.

Dead-heading (removing dead flowers) can be done whenever needed and will often stimulate new growth and blossoms. Knock Out and Drift roses especially benefit from some clipping and cutting back during the summer, and will result in more blossoms.

Prune old blooms above the first 5 leaf junction.

WINTER PROTECTION:

Winter protection is focused on protecting the graft or bud union on the rose (where the shrub meets the roots). Some shrub roses may do fine with no winter protection, or with enough snow to insulate them. Winter protection should be done after a few solid freezes in November.

You can use rose cones to cover roses (prune back if necessary to allow the cone to fit around the rose). You can also place a collar or cylinder around the plant and fill with peat, straw, mulch, or leaves.

Make sure to get rid of any plant debris to help prevent fungus problems the following year.