

Roses

CULTURAL REQUIREMENTS

A little advanced preparation goes a long way when it comes to growing healthy roses. Choose a well-drained site in an area of your garden that receives 6 hours or more of sun per day. Roses enjoy soil that contains plenty of composted organic material. One good solution is to use Rose Planting Mix at the time of planting and/or mix Black Forest compost into the planting hole and surrounding area. Prior to planting, make sure your rose is fully hydrated; give it ample water and allow time for the roots to take it up. Should you be planting more than one rose bush, or adding more to your collection, ensure that there is plenty of room between them for proper air circulation. Clean up any debris on the ground prior to planting.

SELECTION

There are many types and varieties of roses—how will you choose? Give thought to some desired characteristics: fragrance, flower color and size, disease resistance, and form—miniature, bush, climbing and old garden roses. Once you have concluded what your criteria are, you are ready to choose a rose that fits your needs.

CARE OF ROSES

- Once you have planted your rose the commitment begins! Carefully examine your rose bushes for any signs of insect, disease or horticultural problems (see below for some common examples).
- Fertilize your rose(s) once per month during the growing season.
- Ensure good air circulation between the rose and other plants.
- Maintain a regular watering schedule; variables such as the season, weather, exposure, plant size and type all affect the amount of water needed by any individual rose plant. To the best of your ability, do not let your plants dry out and wilt. Wilt equals stress which results in pest and disease susceptibility.
- Remove or “deadhead,” spent blossoms just after the petals begin to fall (or very shortly thereafter). Using sharp pruners, make a cut, at a 45° angle from the stem, approximately ¼” above a leaf set (usually a set of 5 leaflets). Continue this practice during the growing season to signal to the plant to continue to produce more flowers.
- Discontinue fertilizing and deadheading your plant about 6 weeks before the 1st frost is expected (the end of the growing season)—this will “harden off” the plant before it goes dormant for the winter. As an annual practice, some folks begin hardening off their roses in late August.
- Continue to water into fall until the rains arrives.
- Once night temperatures drop into the low 30s, it’s time to winterize your plants. Hybrid tea and floribunda roses benefit from moderately pruning them to approximately waist high. Don’t be concerned about over pruning, as spindly tender young canes that result from light pruning will get beat up by spring rains anyway! In late February/early March you will prune the rose bush to 12”-18” height (see the next section titled ‘Pruning’). Remove any remaining foliage, since what is left on the plant may harbor pest and disease.
- As a piece of the winterization process, many people sprinkle lime around the base of their plants to maintain soil pH throughout winter. It is also at this time a thick layer of mulch is often applied. BE SURE to pull the mulch away from the rose ‘crown’ in the spring.

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PRUNING

Volumes have been written about the pruning of roses, and every gardener seems to have their own thoughts on the subject. One thing we all know is that no matter how you prune your rose plant, short of cutting it off below ground level, it will survive! That being said, mid to late February/early March (many folks keep President's Day as a reminder) is the time to sharpen & clean those pruners and get to work.

NOTE: Climbers, once blooming tree and old garden roses require different pruning than hybrid teas and floribundas. Climbing roses that are trained to a horizontal position should only have the laterals (short, upright shoots coming out from the main canes) cut back to about 2 eye buds. Old, unproductive canes can also be removed. Generally speaking, no more than 1/3 of a climbing or shrub rose will be removed as a winterization practice.

Old garden roses and other one-time bloomers produce flowers on old wood. Pruning should be very light with the focus being maintenance of shape and to remove old, unproductive wood. Pruning, therefore, should be done *after* the bloom cycle (versus in late winter as with hybrid teas and floribundas).

The following are some general guidelines for pruning hybrid tea, miniature and floribunda roses:

- Step back to examine the entire plant, paying special attention to the bottom portion of the plant from which the canes originate (the bud union). Notice old and/or weak canes, as well as those that cross through the middle of the plant. It is good to tell yourself now that by the time you are finished, most of the upper-most portion of the plant will be removed—the goal is to remove all of the extraneous plant material, leaving only the strong, healthy canes.
- Identify the youngest and strongest canes—they usually have a smooth surface and are green in color. Older canes become darker, greyer in color, rough of texture, and are generally not very productive. Those canes will need to be removed at their origin (the bud union), using a sharp pruning saw or loppers. Remove any stumps of old canes at this time, as well.
- Remove any young canes that cross through the middle of the plant. Either take them back to the bud union, or back to the major cane from which they originate.
- Remove canes that crowd one another—leave the stronger of the two present. Also remove any remaining twiggy growth.
- If you haven't already done it, remove any old leaves and *be sure to clean them all up off the ground*. Old foliage may harbor fungus, disease and insects just waiting to eat away at your plant!
- If you applied a layer of mulch to roses during the winterization process, now is the time to move the mulch away from the 'crown' (the base) of the rose. Again, this allows for proper air circulation and to minimize an environment conducive to pests and disease.

Step back as often as you need to in order to look at the plant. When you are done pruning, the result will be a strong plant with only the strongest canes emerging from the bud union. The plant will be a nice, open vase shape.

Further pruning questions specific to your plant? Call or come in to your local Dennis' Seven Dees Garden Center!



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Rose Society

The Portland Rose Society and the American Rose Society are the preeminent rose experts and aficionados in Oregon and the United States. Visit their websites to learn more about roses and their care. Interested in joining the Portland Rose Society? Look on their website for further information, including a calendar of events.

Portland Rose Society—<http://www.portlandrosesociety.org>

American Rose Society—<http://ars.org>