

ROSES ROSES ROSES

Gertrude Stein's refrain "**Rose is a rose is a rose is a rose**" expresses the uniqueness the rose has in our lives. 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. They adorn our homes with the same panoply 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?

Although no other flower has such a long bloom season (May through November), 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. Like any other plant, they require only proper planting, pruning, fertilizing and control of certain pests. Just follow the simple steps described below and 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? Cut flowers? Exhibitions? Is spraying for disease acceptable? 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** (HT) which tend to grow upright and often have one bloom per stem, similar to florist roses; **Floribundas** (F) which tend to have flowers that grow in clusters on lower growing, mound shaped bushes; **Grandifloras** (Gr) which combine the characteristics of Hybrid Teas and Floribundas; **Climbers** (Cl) which have long canes that normally need tying to some structure for support; **Miniatures** (Min) and **Mini-floras** (MinFl) which are normally dwarf bushes that produce small roses in great numbers; and **Shrubs** (S) including English Roses.

Recommended Roses:

Some examples of recommended roses for the Capital Region include: (HT) Veterans Honor, Mister Lincoln, Moonstone, Gemini, Elina, Double Delight & Let Freedom Ring; (Gr) Queen Elizabeth, Melodie Parfumée & Wild Blue Yonder; (F) Sexy Remy, Dicky, Play Girl, Sheila's Perfume, Sunsprite & Iceberg; (Cl) Dublin Bay, Don Juan, Iceberg & America; (Min) Fairhope, Kristen & Miss Flippins; (MinFl) Butter Cream, Conundrum & Foolish Pleasure; (S) Heritage, Graham Thomas, Gertrude Jekyll & Bonica; (OGR) Lamarque, Paul Neyron, Rose de Rescht, Baronne Prévoste, Marchesa Boccella & Louise Oldier. See the companion brochures for additional recommendations.

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 organic material such as compost, leaf mold, peat moss, Com-Pro, Pro-Mix or whatever you can get easily. A good formula is about 3 parts original clay soil, 1 part Pro-Mix or peat moss, 1 part Clay Breaker, LeafGro or finely shredded pine bark, and 1 part Perlite. Additionally, for each bush in the bed, add 1 cup calcitic lime (to raise pH to 6.5), 2 cups green sand (potash & minors), 2 cups bone meal (phosphorus), 1 cup Milorganite (iron), 2 cups of gypsum (calcium), 1½ cups Epsom salts (magnesium) and 1/2 cup triple superphosphate (phosphorus). 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 even with the soil surface 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. Use the original soil excavated from the hole to form a shallow basin around the bush to retain water. Water 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 Blossom Booster (10-30-20) 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, 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 (about the time 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:

Although many disease resistant rose varieties are being introduced every year, most roses will benefit from a preventative spray program. The most effective program to prevent fungus combines a **systemic fungicide** (e.g., *Immunox*, *Honor Guard*, *Infuse* or *Funginex*) with a **contact fungicide** (e.g., *Mancozeb*, *Manzate*, or *Dithane*) in the same spray solution. This combination will reduce the possibility of developing resistant strains of fungi and should be applied every 10 to 14 days. Sucking and chewing insects can be controlled by *Merit* or any insecticide for roses. Mites can be controlled by a periodic forced stream of water to the undersides of foliage or with a miticide such as *Avid*. *Bayer Advanced 3 in 1 Insect, Disease and Mite Control* is effective against all of the above. Caution, do not spray in the heat of the day, wear protective clothing, water deeply the day before spraying, and always dilute chemicals according to the label.

Fertilizing:

Roses, like other flowers will perform better with a sensible fertilizer program. Two simple suggestions are: **Alt.#1:** After spring pruning apply 1 to 1½ cups of Osmocote (8 or 9 month duration) around the drip line of each bush, or; **Alt.#2:** Mid April scratch in 2 to 3 cups of Espoma Plant-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 bush; double the amounts for climbers and large shrubs and one quarter for minis and minifloras. Always water well before and after feeding.

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 is about 9 gallons, applied as 4 to 5 gallons twice a week. Potted roses will benefit from watering every day in hot weather and every two days otherwise.

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

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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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