



# GARDEN INFORMATION SERIES



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## ROSES

**THEIR SELECTION, PLANTING, AND CARE**



# ROSES

## THEIR SELECTION, PLANTING, AND CARE

Roses have long been the most loved flowering shrubs in home gardens. Indeed, they are popularly referred to as the queen of flowers. A few simple steps will help to ensure that your roses grow and flower well and are worthy of their noble title.

### SELECTION

Roses have an undeserved reputation as temperamental plants requiring enormous amounts of care. Rather, roses are easy to grow and have very few pest problems if adapted varieties are selected and properly situated in the garden or landscape. There are many types of roses available to fit most landscape situations in the home garden. The two broad categories are garden roses and landscape roses. Garden roses include the well known hybrid teas, floribundas, grandifloras, and climbers, and are planted mostly for their flowers. The main garden roses include the following:

**Hybrid Teas**-They are the most common roses in home gardens today. They form a shrub three to five feet tall with large, mostly single but spectacular flowers.

**Floribundas**-These have smaller flowers borne more profusely in clusters on a shrub two to four feet tall. Many of today's newer varieties resemble hybrid teas.

**Grandifloras**-Intermediate between the hybrid teas and floribundas, they combine the large flowers of hybrid teas with the increased bloom production of floribundas and have long stems on a vigorous shrub five to eight feet tall.

**Climbers**-They have flexible

stems to 20 feet long or more and need support on a structure, such as a wall, fence, trellis, espalier, pergola, or arbor.

Landscape roses, sometimes called shrub roses, are varieties developed for use as general landscape plants, and offer several advantages. They possess glossy green leaves, have few thorns, require little pruning and disease and pest control, are well suited for low maintenance landscapes, including drip irrigation, and do not require removal of old flowers since petals fall away cleanly. Growing on their own roots and not budded or grafted, landscape roses flower throughout the year with greatest bloom in mid-spring and early autumn.

Some other kinds of roses include the miniatures and English garden types. Miniatures make good container plants. English roses and certain older varieties have more fragrance than some newer varieties but might not bloom as profusely.

Consider some of the All-American Rose Selections (AARS). Roses earn this award after two-to-three-year evaluations in test gardens around the country. AARS designation means these roses are often more disease resistant and have sturdy growth and exceptional flowers. When selecting plants, look for disease-resistant varieties.

Roses require protection from wind and need high light to be healthy and perform best, so pick a wind-protected place in your garden with full sun all day near the coast or with late afternoon shade in hot inland areas. Space roses so there is room to move and work between plants. Do not crowd them since plants need good air movement for disease prevention. Soil should be well drained but still retain water. Clay and sandy soils are okay but

watering must be adjusted, heavier and infrequent on clay and lighter but frequent on sandy soils. If you have companion plants, choose ones with the same or similar light, soil, and water requirements as roses. Bark mulch or wood chips help to retain soil moisture.

Place roses where their splendid, colorful flowers can be admired from the house. Roses serve double duty in the garden and landscape as providers of cut flowers of legendary quality. The landscape roses fulfill the same garden and landscape roles as most other shrubs. They find use as flowering borders, foreground plants, barriers, groundcovers, and even as informal hedges. They are unusually effective when massed, such as in a formal or informal rose garden. Of course, a single, solitary plant with spectacular flowers and without competing plants is an unsurpassed accent or specimen. Miniature roses make fine potted specimens, which can be positioned around the garden or patio as needed.

### PLANTING

Roses are available at the nursery or garden center as either packaged or unpackaged, bare-root, dormant plants in the winter and early spring or as containerized plants year round. Avoid selecting packaged plants kept in a warm, sunny location at the nursery; they might be desiccated and/or have weak, premature shoot growth. Bare-root plants are usually less expensive, require less care, are easier to handle and plant, and offer a much wider selection of types and varieties. Containerized plants are more expensive but offer the benefit of one being able to see exactly what the flowers are like if purchased during the blooming period. Also, containerized roses

can add instant color to the garden and are useful if one desires an instant full-sized plant to fill in an existing gap in the garden or landscape. However, most roses do not thrive in containers so plants potted the current year are preferred to those carried over from previous years.

Plant bare-root roses the same day they are purchased. They can be stored up to seven days if left in a cool place and roots are kept moist. Dig a hole large enough to spread the roots evenly without crumpling them. Mound a firm cone of soil in the center of the hole and spread the roots over the cone, taking care to keep the bud union four inches above the soil line. Backfill around the roots with unamended soil originally taken from the hole. Settle the soil by inserting a hose and flooding the backfill. Form a watering basin three to four inches high and about three feet diameter around the plant or place a drip emitter about six inches from the stem. Spread a two-inch layer of mulch in the basin and water thoroughly. For containerized roses select a plant in at least a three-gallon-size container. Dig a hole twice as wide but the same depth as the root ball. Carefully remove the plant from the container and place it in the center of the hole. Continue planting as you would for bare-root plants.

### PRUNING

In most cases prune roses in January. For garden roses like hybrid teas, floribundas, and grandifloras, cut out all weak, diseased, and dead stems (canes) and those crossing over others or arising from below the bud union. Leave 6-10 canes evenly spaced in a circle around the plant and growing toward the outside, keeping the middle open to form a vase-shaped

structure. Cut back these remaining stems or canes, leaving about 1/3-2/3 the previous year's growth. Removing more growth gives fewer, larger flowers on longer stems, while removing less growth retains plant size. Make the cut at an outward-facing leaf or bud. Begin each cut about 1/8 inch above the bud or leaf and angle it downward at 45° toward the inside of the cane.

Climbing roses should not be pruned for two to three years after planting, allowing them to become large, well establish plants. At that time select six, well spaced, horizontal, spreading canes and tie them to the support. Remove all remaining canes and any coming from below the bud union. Subsequent annual pruning each January consists of removing only those old and unproductive canes, adding two or three new, main canes to replace those removed. Flowers form on short laterals or spurs arising from the main canes. Cut these back to three buds at annual pruning. Prune strictly spring-flowering climbers after flowering ends, not in January.

Landscape or shrub type roses require less detailed pruning; prune them mainly to shape and control size. Groundcover roses should only be pruned to remove upright branches.

After pruning rake up and discard old leaves, twigs, and stems, and spray plants and soil with a dormant spray of oil or lime-sulfur if pests or diseases are problems. Reapply mulch if necessary.

### GENERAL CARE

Roses flower on new growth, which occurs in cyclical flushes throughout the growing season from about March through November. Each cycle begins with a flush of new growth and ends

with a flush of blooms. Instead of one or two heavy applications of fertilizer during the growing season, make several light applications, timing them just prior to each new flush of growth. Use a fertilizer with an N-P-K ratio of 3-1-3 or 3-1-2 (for example 12-4-12 or 11-4-8). The total amount of fertilizer applied during the growing season should not exceed the recommended yearly amount.

Water during the growing season by flooding the basin with one to two inches of water or using drip or bubbler systems to water when the soil is dry one inch deep. Avoid frequently wetting the leaves to reduce diseases. However, occasional washing of leaves with a strong spray of water can reduce spider mites, a common pest in warm inland areas, and aphids. Wash leaves early in the morning so they can dry by nightfall. When cutting or removing flowers, cut back far enough to remove at least three leaves and to an outside leaf or bud, while still leaving at least two leaves with five leaflets on the cane. Regularly inspect plants for pests, such as aphids, spider mites, and thrips, and diseases, such as powdery mildew, rust, and black spot.

Ask your nursery or garden center professional for additional information and assistance about roses and their care.

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