

This pamphlet addresses cultural conditions required for roses, general care, and rose type definitions.

Terms defined

Hardiness- This term refers to how much cold a rose can tolerate. Our hardiest roses are probably rugosa and species types.

Disease resistance- A factor here in Portland, where weather conditions can lead to fungal diseases such as black spot, rust and mildew. Resistance is based on plant trials Nation wide and may not apply here. For example: the Hybrid tea rose Tropicanna has an overall performance rating of 7.5 but in Portland it seems to serve best as a culture medium for mildew. Please consult the Washington Park Rose garden's listings of roses recommended for Portland (available at our Information Desks).

Cultural Conditions & care

Sun exposure- If your rose area receives less than six hours of direct sun a day, consider growing something else. Growing roses in limited sun is an up hill (and generally losing) battle.

Air circulation- Good air circulation is essential to minimizing disease. Allow a minimum of three feet from center to center of the plants. Keep interior growth to a minimum by rubbing out or pruning inward facing buds and branches.

Watering- As a rule of thumb, water deeply and infrequently. Once a week is usually fine for established plants. Avoid getting water on the leaves, or water early in the day.

Feeding- Any good rose food used as directed will do. Organic, chemical, dry or liquid, choose the type convenient to use as directed. Feed from first growth until Sept. 1 for established roses. Newly planted, bare root roses are fertilized from the first blooms to Sept. 1st. Roses purchased and planted in bloom need a month rest period after planting. Then feed as the fertilizer package directs until Sept. 1st.

Pruning- In late November remove about 1/3 of the height on roses which will be affected by winter wind. In late February or early March, prune hard as directed for each rose type.

Removing spent blooms- When flowers fade, follow the stem down to an outward pointing leaf. Cut the stem at a 45 degree angle about 1/4 inch above the outward leaf. A new flower bearing stem will grow in the direction the leaf was facing. Stop removing spent flowers in mid September. This allows the rose hips to form and promotes dormancy for winter interest.

Rose types



At Portland Nursery, we divide our rose section into ten sub sections outlined below.

Hybrid Teas- The most commonly planted type of garden rose. It is generally long stemmed with a single rose per stem. There is a tremendous range of color, form, and disease resistance in this huge group.

Pruning: Select the 5 to 7 most robust canes and remove all other to the point of origin. Prune the selected canes to 18-24" long. Cut just above an out facing dormant bud or leaf scar.

Grandiflora roses- Grandifloras are often taller and more vigorous. Generally, they are more disease resistant. They bear multiple roses at the ends of strong stems. The cluster is composed of roses as large as single Hybrid Teas.

Pruning: Prune like the hybrid teas, but leave selected canes at 24-36" long.

Floribunda roses- Cluster bearing types, but are generally smaller and shorter than Grandifloras. Used for cutting and garden display. Disease resistance varies.

Pruning: Remove all twiggy and crossing growth. Shorten remaining canes to 1/2 the original length. Cut just above the nearest out facing bud.

English roses- One of the newest races of roses. These combine the look and scent of antique roses with modern virtues of smaller sized bushes and repeat bloom. Many grow as the Hybrid Teas. Sometimes spindly the first couple of years. Eventually they form a strong plant.

Pruning- Most are thinned of crossing and weak growth. Then cut back the remaining canes by 1/3 of the total growth.

Landscape roses- These roses vary greatly in growth from ground cover roses to large shrub roses. Most require less maintenance than other types. Generally, they are marketed as disease resistant. To be used as a summer flowering shrub in the landscape. Usually mediocre cutting flowers.

Pruning - Varies by cultivar. Please ask for details at Information.

Heritage roses- These are roses which have been in cultivation since 1850 or earlier. Many of these are very large shrubs (think

blackberry brush). Most have only one spectacular annual bloom. Moss roses, musk, cabbage and damasks are found here.

Pruning- Plan to have a pair of sheers in one hand and a tome on old roses in the other!

Rugosa roses- Our hardiest and most disease resistant roses. Many are five petaled and many form enormous rose hips. The range in height and color is vast. Most repeat bloom.

Pruning- None required, though some may be desired. Do not spray.

Species roses- These are “wild” roses, as they occur in nature, not a hybrid. Most grow large and have only one annual bloom. These are for large gardens.

Pruning- Little or none required.

Climbing roses- Most climbing roses are tall ‘sports’ of roses already listed. Most grow about 8-12’ tall. We also include some pillar roses among the climbers. These are roses that can be grown vertically. Climbing roses grown in this manner will bloom only at the tips of their growth. Train upward and then out for maximum flower production. Any rambler roses we may carry (30-40’ and one bloom) are kept in the Heritage subsection.

Miniature roses- These are like smaller versions of Hybrid Teas. They have mini flowers rather than a mini plant. Although, the plant size is generally in proportion to the flowers. Micro mini roses are available seasonally through the color department.

Planting a rose

Roses need to be planted at least three feet apart. Some larger types such as the rugosas, species or Heritage roses may need three to six feet of space.

1. Dig a hole at least 18” wide and deep. If the soil is dry, fill the hole with water and allow to drain. Then amend the soil in the hole and the fill soil. Aim for a ratio of 1/3 compost to 2/3 soil.

2. Build a mound of soil in the middle of the hole. If you are buying roses early in the season, they are essentially bare root. Do not be surprised if all the soil falls away from the roots. Trim any broken roots. Place the plant above the mound so the bud union (swelling at the base of the stem) is above or at ground level.

If you are buying roses in May or later, they should be rooted in the container. Therefore there is no need to build a mound in the hole. Just remove the pot and plant the rose so the bud union is at or above the soil level.

3. Fill the hole 2/3 full with the compost and soil mixture. Lightly tap the soil to remove air pockets. Fill the remainder of the hole so the soil level is even with the surrounding soil.

4. Water thoroughly and slowly.

Written by Michael Wallace

Introduction to roses

Establishing and maintaining healthy roses



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