

The Basics for Growing Good Roses

By Bill Kozemchak

Good planting site: The site you choose should receive at least 5 hours of sun each day. The roses should not be planted near trees or shrubs with vigorous root systems, as they would compete for food with the roses.

Planting: Dig a hole 18 inches across and 12-18 inches deep, so the roots will establish themselves easier. Refill with amended soil. The soil can be amended with compost, peat moss, leaves, **composted** manure, or other organic material. The entire bed could also be amended giving the new rose roots plenty of room to spread. **Do not add any fertilizer with nitrogen to the hole when planting a bare root rose, this will burn the newly forming roots!** Bone meal or triple super phosphate can be placed at the bottom of the hole with a thin layer of soil on top to help establish the roots. Water the new bush in, and give it a good soaking. Mound the soil up around the newly planted rose to keep in the moisture until the roots establish, then gradually wash it away during the growing season. Water several times a week after planting, to help establish the roots. Do this for a few weeks.

Fertilizing: Roses will grow without being fertilized, but they will do much better if they are fertilized. **Do not fertilize a newly planted bare root rose until after it blooms the first time.** Normally this will be about 6 weeks. If done before that, you run the risk of burning the new roots that are establishing, and the plant could die. Always be sure the roses are watered well when fertilizing.

Water, water, water: The most important thing roses need is water. Although they need good drainage, roses love water. They do not like to sit in soggy soil, if the soil does not drain well, the roots will rot. The more water they receive the better bloom they will produce. Not enough water will stress the plant. They like to be deep watered, not just sprinkled. Light watering will bring the feeder roots to the surface, this is not good in the heat or cold, where they could be more easily damaged.

Diseases Prevention: Blackspot is the worst problem in this area. It can be prevented by a regular spray program with a fungicide. The key is regular, once during the season will not do the trick. Bayer Advanced All-In-One Rose and Flower Care is a soil drench that is listed as effective for 6 weeks. It contains a fungicide, insecticide and fertilizer. If you don't want to spray or use chemicals, look for disease resistant varieties. The Rugosa roses and many of the new shrub or landscape roses (The Knockout series, Meidiland series, Flower Carpets, Romanticas, etc.) are very good and will do well without spraying.

Pruning: Roses should be pruned in the spring. They should be cut back to clean healthy pith (the center of the cane), this is usually white, but some varieties may be slightly darker. **Do not cut them to the ground unless the cane is completely dead,** this will rob them food supplies stored in the canes over the winter. Prune them 8 inches or higher. Higher pruning will give you more, but smaller flowers. If you don't want to prune at all, just cut out any dead, diseased, or damaged canes, these should always be removed. Any small (less than pencil thickness) growth should also be removed. It is also helpful to open the center of the bush, to allow for air circulation, which helps with disease prevention. During the growing season removing spent blooms (deadheading) will help the rose rebloom sooner.