



# FactSheet

**Extension**

## Ohio State University Extension Fact Sheet

### Horticulture and Crop Science

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## Planting Roses

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Growing beautiful roses begins with proper siting and proper planting techniques. The following information describes the first steps in growing healthy and attractive roses.

### Planting Site

Roses establish quickly and are more resistant to pests and diseases when planted in an ideal location. Roses require at least six hours of direct sunlight for optimal flowering and growth, though full sun is preferable. An eastern exposure, which receives morning sun, is ideal for roses. Choose a planting location that is not shaded by buildings or trees to maximize the amount of sunshine the plants receive. Avoid planting roses near trees and shrubs which will compete for moisture and nutrients. Make sure the site is open to allow for air movement. Also consider water drainage to or from the planting site. Roses grow best in well-drained soil and decline with standing water around their root system.

### Planting Time

Roses can be planted from early spring into early fall. Earlier planting is normally preferred to late planting. Spring or early summer planting allows plenty of time for good root establishment before winter, whereas planting after mid-summer may not. Other advantages of spring planting are that selection of cultivars and availability of quality plants are usually better than later in the season.

Planting time varies based on how plants are packaged. Bare root roses should be planted in early to mid-spring before the new shoots start to develop. Typically, this will be late March into early April unless soils remain wet. Potted roses can be planted anytime from spring to early fall. Spring planting should be done after danger of killing frost, usually late April to mid-May in Ohio.

### Plant Selection

Roses are available as bare-root plants or potted. Bare-root plants are usually less expensive than potted plants, but potted plants have a greater survival rate than bare-root plants. Both are graded to insure quality, with Grade 1 indicating the highest quality.

## Plant Preparation

Bare-root plants and potted plants require special handling prior to planting. Plant bare root roses as soon as possible after purchasing or receiving them through the mail. Unwrap plants from the packaging and soak the root system in a bucket of water for about an hour prior to planting. If planting must be delayed for a few days, keep the plants moist and in a cool, dark location, or place them into a temporary soil trench in a shaded location. Prune out any damaged, dead or broken roots and stems before planting.

Potted plants require little pre-planting attention. Keep plants watered and in a sunny location until they can be planted in the garden. Prune out any damaged, dead or broken stems before planting.

## Preparing the Soil

Roses thrive in a loamy, well-drained garden soil with a pH of 5.5 to 7.0. Begin with a soil test to determine pH and nutrient levels so that corrections can be made, if needed, as the soil is being prepared.

Most soils, whether clay or sandy, benefit from the addition of organic matter which improves drainage, aeration, and nutrient holding capacity. Spread a two to four inch layer of organic matter on the soil surface. Organic matter sources include compost, rotted manure, leaf mold, peat moss, composted sewage sludge, fine grain potting bark or other source. Then, apply three pounds of superphosphate per 100 square feet to encourage root growth. This is the only nutrient added at planting. Finally, turn the organic matter and superphosphate into the soil with a shovel or garden spade to a depth of 12 inches.

If planting a rose in an existing bed, dig out enough soil to form a hole approximately 15 inches deep and 18 inches wide. Mix three ounces of superphosphate and approximately three shovelfuls of organic matter with the soil removed from the hole. This becomes the backfill soil for the new plant.

## Spacing

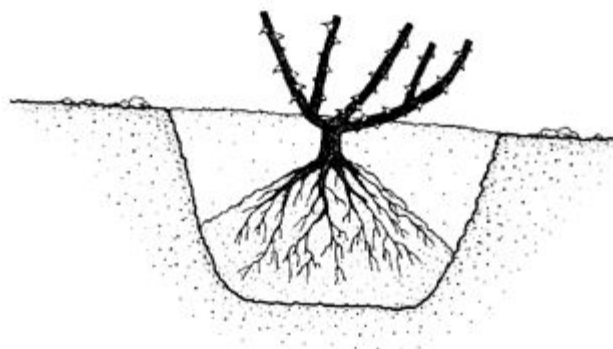
Plant spacing varies according to the growth habit of the rose plant. Plants growing too close together will be tall and spindly and produce only a few small flowers.

Follow these general spacing guidelines for best results: Hybrid teas, grandifloras, floribundas 18 to 30 inches Climbers 8 to 12 feet Miniatures 12 to 15 inches

## Planting

Set the rose plant on the peak of the cone and spread the roots down the sides.

Once the soil is prepared, dig a hole approximately 15 inches deep and 18 inches wide. If planting bare root roses, form a small mound of soil in the center of the planting hole. See diagram. Then, set the plant on the peak of the mound and spread the roots down the sides. Begin filling the hole with the prepared soil mixture making sure that the graft union or "knob" on the plant is just above



ground level, which allows for some settling. Carefully work the soil mixture around and over each root. Add water to settle the soil around the roots and finish filling the hole.

Once set, mound the canes with an additional four to six inches of soil to prevent withering of the canes before the roots become established. Once the new shoots begin to develop and the danger of frost is past, remove this soil slowly, over a week's time.

If planting a potted plant, remove it from its container and hold it in the hole so the top of the soil ball is at ground level. A common problem is planting too deep; make sure the plant is placed at the same depth it was previously growing in the container.

Fill the hole with the prepared soil mixture. Water the plant well to allow the backfilled soil to settle around the root ball. Add more soil if necessary.

## After Care

Water at planting as described above, making sure the entire root mass is wet. Plants require an inch of water weekly. If rainfall is insufficient, apply water by irrigation through the first growing season to aid plant establishment. Soak the soil to a depth of 12 inches at each watering to encourage deep rooting. Do not overhead sprinkle, which encourages disease problems; water at soil level.

Mulching is recommended after planting. Apply a two-inch layer of mulch to reduce water loss from evaporation during the summer months. Mulch also increases the organic matter content of the soil, moderates soil temperature, and suppresses weed growth.

Refer to Extension fact sheet [HYG-1205-96](#) for more information about fertilizing, pruning and winter protection of roses.

## References

Taylor, Lee J. (1994). *Roses for the Home*. North Central Regional Extension Publications. Extension Publication #252. Clip art is copied from this publication.

Smith, Elton. (1988). *The Culture and Care of Hardy Roses*. The Ohio State University, Extension Bulletin 757. Agdex 276/21.

\*This is the person currently responsible for the contents of this factsheet.

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