

# Growing Roses in Montana



*Once upon a time, in the days of yore, a goddess arose from the sea. This exquisite beauty was Venus, the goddess of love. Upon seeing her, Earth became jealous. Vowing to create something of equal loveliness, Earth combined the most rapturous fragrance with the most lovely form, thus bestowing upon mankind a great gift; the rose.*



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## GROWING ROSES

**Exposure**— When deciding where to plant your roses, remember that they need full sun. Ideally 8-10 hours of sunlight a day. Afternoon sun is preferable because it's warmer, and encourages better growth.

**Soil**—Soil conditions are very important for roses. Incorporating compost along with bone meal to your rose bed at planting time will greatly improve the health of your plants. All roses prefer fertile, well-drained, moist soil. They will not tolerate water-logged soil at any time of the year. If you have heavy clay soil, it may be necessary to build a raised bed to ensure adequate drainage. All roses, even the hardiest varieties, should have a layer of mulch around the roots to help retain soil moisture and provide winter protection.

**Watering**— Water deeply and regularly (twice a week) in the morning, and only at the base of the rose. It is preferable to use drip irrigation and not overhead sprinklers. This keeps the leaves as dry as possible, which keeps diseases down. Water less frequently from early fall on. Allow the soil to become slightly drier in order to slow down the roses' growth and allow them to go dormant. Water heavily a few weeks before the ground freezes, usually the first of November, to prevent the roots from being damaged from cold, dry soil.

**Air Circulation**— Air movement is very important for optimum health. Gentle breezes keep the foliage dry which helps to control diseases like black spot and powdery mildew. Be sure to plant roses far enough apart so there is adequate air circulation between them.

**Fertilization**— Fertilize established roses once a month in May, June and July when they are actively growing with a granular slow release or water-soluble fertilizer. Don't fertilize after the end of July. This allows the rosebushes to slow down growth in preparation for winter. In the typical Great Falls soil, it is a good idea to add iron to your soil if your roses show signs of chlorosis or yellowing of the leaves.

## PLANTING ROSES

**Bare root**— Bare root roses should be planted as soon as possible in the spring. Be careful not to allow the roots to become dry or freeze. Before you plant bare root roses, soak them in water to hydrate the roots, then prune off any broken roots and about 1 inch off the ends of all the roots. This will promote new growth. Dig a hole large enough for the roots to spread out, about 1½ times as wide and deep. In the hole make a mound of fine soil for the roots to set on and spread out the roots. Mix in a handful of bone meal. If you are planting grafted roses, the graft should be about 4 inches below the soil line. This will protect the graft from winter injury. If you are planting non-grafted or own root roses, they should be planted with their root crowns at or slightly below the soil line. Backfill the hole about ¾ with a mixture of soil and compost. Water it in to settle the soil and finish backfilling. Form a watering well around the base of the plant to hold in water and add a layer of mulch.

**Containerized**— Container grown roses can be planted any time during the growing season up to 2-3 weeks before the ground freezes. Water the container well. Dig a hole as deep as the container and twice as wide. Remove from the pot and loosen the roots. Set in the hole and backfill about ¾ with a mixture of soil and compost. If the plant is not rooted in, follow instructions in handout. If the rose is grafted, plant it deeper as with a bare root.

## PEST AND DISEASE CONTROL

The best way to control pests and diseases on your roses is to inspect them on a regular basis. By doing this, you will catch the problem early before it damages your rose. Remember that it is always easier to prevent diseases and pests than to try to control them after they have damaged your plant. Insects and diseases strike plants that are stressed or weak. So it is very important to keep your roses healthy by giving them adequate moisture and fertilizer, allowing air circulation around the plant and keeping their leaves as dry as possible when watering.

**Black spot** is spread from plant to plant by splashing water. If your rose plant does have black spot, be sure to clean up diseased leaves after they drop in the fall to prevent the disease from wintering over in the soil and affecting your rose the next year.

**Powdery mildew** is unsightly but does not kill roses. It spreads among drought stressed plants when the weather is cool and humid. Adequate air circulation will usually help to prevent powdery mildew.

**Mosaic virus** creates strange leaf patterns including bright yellow ring spots, lines and netting. There is no cure for mosaic virus and the affected rosebushes won't pass on the disease to others nearby or contaminate the soil. It shortens the life span of the rose and in most cases it is best to just remove the rose bush and replace it with a healthy one.

**Spider mites and aphids** are common pests on rose bushes. These pests will not kill the plant, but are unsightly and decrease the plants vigor. Several products are available to control pests and disease. Rose Spray II is a liquid insecticide and fungicide in one. Systemic Rose Care is a granular fertilizer and insecticide in one. Fung-onil is an oil-based fungicide. Dormant Oil is a non-toxic insecticide.

## ROSE VARIETIES AND CARE

**Hardy shrub roses** are free blooming plants with differing flower sizes and forms but all have a full bushy attractive habit. Shrub roses usually have good disease resistance, are very hardy, and mostly grown on their own roots which make them much more resilient to our harsh winters (if they die back to the ground, the same rose will re-grow from the roots). They don't need special pruning in the fall and don't require winter protection. The only pruning necessary is in the spring to thin out dead branches and to shape. Remove spent flowers throughout the summer, which will promote more flowering. Stop deadheading about the end of August to allow rose hips to form. This allows the rose to become dormant for winter.

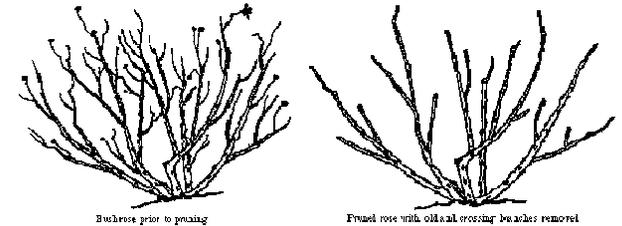
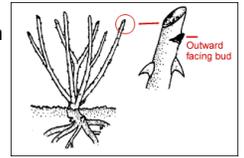
**Hardy climbing roses**, like shrub roses, do not require winter protection. Climbing roses should not be pruned the first two or three years except to remove dead wood or to train. The main objective during the first few years is to let the rose establish mature canes. Tie these canes loosely to a trellis with soft material as to not damage the stems. Climbing roses need to be supported, as they do not have self-clinging or twining tendrils like many climbing vines.

**Tender roses**, such as hybrid tea, miniature, floribunda and grandiflora will survive our harsh climates, but do need additional care. When planting, bury the graft union about 2 inches below the soil. In the fall cut back your roses (see pruning on next page) and clean up any leaves around your roses. They may harbor over wintering insect pests and disease spores. In the fall, cover your rose with a mound of mulch to a minimum depth of 10". To prevent the mulch from being blown away, sprinkle a bit of soil over the top. Spray the surface of the mound with water, which will eventually freeze to form a crust. In the spring watch the native trees. As soon as their leaf buds start to swell, the area is pretty much safe from hard frosts, and protective mulch coverings can be removed. Lift the mulch off with your hands, rather than pulling off with a rake, to avoid damaging tender new growth. If mulches are not removed at this point, the roses will start to produce growth that is weak and spindly. After removing the mulch prune your rose as described on the next page.

## PRUNING ROSES

**Hardy** shrub roses need little pruning. Just remove the dead branches or branch tips in early spring as the buds are beginning to swell.

- When making cuts, prune to an outward growing bud. Angle the cut about 45 degrees.
- Remove dead, diseased, or damaged wood and weak canes any time you see them. When removing diseased canes, sterilize the shears by dipping them in alcohol or a chlorine solution between each cut.
- Damage may extend into wood that looks healthy on the outside; keep cutting until the pith at the center of the cane is white to light green.
- Remove crossing or inward growing canes so your rose is more open which allows better air circulation and light penetration.
- Once a hardy shrub rose is three to four years old, it's a good idea to remove one-quarter to one-third of the oldest, thickest canes. Prune them off at ground level to stimulate the growth of new canes, which will produce more flowers.



**Tender roses** can be pruned in the fall or spring. If you are pruning tender roses in the fall, cut them back to 1 foot tall. This way you are left with a shorter bush to mulch and no thorny branches to scratch you. There are also no long canes that can sway in the wind and pull apart the protective mulch. If you prune your roses in the fall, you may need to prune them lightly again in the spring to remove any winterkilled branch tips. During a mild winter, tender roses may not die back as much as they do during a harsher winter. By waiting until spring to prune, you may end up with taller rosebushes. When cutting flowers for display, sever the stem just above a leaf with five leaflets.

