



Roses – Selection and Growing

Introduction:

Roses are one of the most popular flowering shrubs grown today, with thousands of different cultivars available, and more being released every year.

They have been prized by gardeners across the ages for their colour and fragrance. There are many different sizes and shapes now available, from large scrambling climbers, through to low spreading

groundcovers. Some also have the added interest of hips that mature into beautiful reds and oranges throughout the autumn.

Selection:

Before selecting a rose there are some important things to consider.

1. Make sure that you have the right growing conditions. Roses require at least 5-6 hours of direct sun per day, good ventilation, protection from strong winds and a slightly acid soil, though are not overly fussy. Correct growing conditions mean that your rose will grow with very little extra attention.
2. Consider what you want the rose for, flowers for picking? Fragrance? Hardy groundcover? Potting? What colour is going to suit your colour scheme? Once you've decided what is important to you, pop down to your local nursery and see what they have available.

Roses are traditionally available in pots through the entire year, and bare rooted in the winter months when the plants are dormant.

When selecting a rose, make sure that it has good strong branching, with healthy growth all over the plant. Make sure that the branches are nice and firm, with no signs of black spots, bad tearing, or scale. The leaves should be green and firm, with few signs of disease or yellowing.

Fewer nurseries stock bare-rooted roses these days, as they can often be unreliable. If purchasing a bare-rooted rose try to select one that has not had the roots exposed. Root exposure can reduce the success of the plant surviving once planted.

If the nursery doesn't have exactly what you want, talk to the staff. They will probably be able to recommend an alternative, or possibly order the exact rose you are looking for.

Planting

Once you have made your rose purchase its time to plant. Planting as soon as possible after purchase makes caring for your rose a lot easier. If planting in the ground prepare first by digging in some good quality compost. This will help hold nutrients and water in the soil around your plant.

Water the rose well before planting, to minimise transplant shock. Dig a good width hole, the depth should be slightly deeper than the pot the rose is in.

Remove the rose from the pot, teasing the roots out slightly, and ensuring the level of the potting mix remains at the same level as the surrounding soil, move the soil and compost back in around the roots. If the rose is bare rooted,

trim any broken branches or roots before planting. Examine the stem below the graft, there should be some discolouration. This will indicate where the soil was, and the level the rose should be planted in your garden. Firm the rose in well and water deeply, using plant starter or a seaweed based fertiliser to help get the roots stimulated.

If the rose is to be potted, make sure you have a large enough pot, and an appropriate rose for potting. When potting a rose, it is important to use a premium grade potting mix, like Debco's Pot Power. Follow the same procedure as for planting a potted rose.

If it is a standard rose, it will require staking, use the stake the rose was provided with, or if that is too flimsy, replace with a firm stake. Use soft plant ties that won't cut into the stem. Fertilise at this stage with a mild fertiliser like Blood & Bone or Debco, saving the stronger rose fertilisers for when the roots have established.

Ongoing Care

Once your rose is planted, water regularly. This may be every day during hot weather, or every second day during milder weather. Once a week for the next 2 months apply plant starter, or seaweed based fertiliser, to encourage root establishment. Once the rose is established (approximately 4-6 months), it will appreciate regular deep watering, we recommend 2-3 times a week during summer. When watering, it is important to avoid wetting the foliage. This will help to prevent the occurrence and spread of fungal diseases like black spot and powdery mildew. If wetting the foliage is unavoidable, water in the mornings so that it has an opportunity to dry out during the day. Fertilise every 6-8 weeks during the growing season with a good rose fertiliser like Sudden Impact for Roses. Regular applications of liquid fertiliser like Charlie Carp or Phostrogen will also keep your rose healthy and blooming for months. A healthy plant is better able to withstand drought and pest and disease attack.

Pests and Diseases

To control pest and disease attacks, it is best to identify them early and treat as soon as possible. Some common ones to look out for are aphids, thrips, black spot, powdery mildew and rust.

For aphids, thrips and mites, either remove by hand or a strong jet of water, or spray with a pyrethrum spray, or soap spray. These are mild, organic based sprays that are relatively safe to use. For bad or repeated infestations, use a systemic insecticide like Confidor, or Folimat. This will give you residual protection for 8-14 days.

Rose scale is best tackled with a horticultural oil to smother the insects. This can also be an effective control of mites as well.

For fungal diseases, remove any affected material and throw in the bin. This includes leaves that have already fallen, as they will harbour spores that can re-infect your plants. If you want to use a relatively safe method of control, spray every couple of weeks with a milk spray or copper based spray during spring and autumn when most these diseases are prevalent. For stronger control, use a rose black spot spray, or Triforine.

Always use sprays according to the manufacturers directions, and always wear appropriate safety gear.