

Roses

If you expect your new rose to live for 20 years, and they are certainly capable of this and more, then the planting process is critical to success. Here is an easy, step by step guide to avoiding the main pitfalls.

LOCATION

The first three rules for buying real estate also apply to planting roses. Roses need plenty of sunlight, ideally uninterrupted for the whole day. While a few varieties will flower in shade, all are healthier and will produce more and better quality blooms in full sun.

Soils of near coastal areas tend to be very alkaline, while most roses thrive in slightly acid reacting soils. A rose family that thrive in coastal areas are the rugosa. These spiny shrub roses grow naturally along the coast in Japan and Korea.

If roses have grown in the same area for ten years or more, new bushes can suffer from a mysterious decline. The soil is said to be 'rose sick'. If you want to replant a rose then remove a wheelbarrow size amount of soil and replace with fresh prepared soil mix.

Free drainage is essential for long term success. In heavy soil you can test drainage by digging a hole about 30 cm deep and wide and filling it several times with water. If after one or two hours, the water is still present, then you have poor drainage and you will find roses difficult to grow.

One solution can be to make a raised bed in these areas. Lifting the soil level by 20 to 50cm, can make a significant improvement.

Fresh air ventilation is important for disease control. Bush and stem roses don't like being crowded by walls and overhanging plants. Most roses have a triple dislike of growing under trees as a result of shading, root competition and the lack of ventilation.

Shelter from strong winds is a less clear-cut requirement. Established roses are actually very wind tough and grow in exposed sites, better than many shrubs. However, the same plant in a wind sheltered spot should grow and flower far better..

Staking of roses is a controversial topic. A short stake to prevent the new plant from rocking around in the wind is a good idea. For example the stake would need to be only as high as the top of the bud union after planting. Staking is best done before placing the plant in position.

If subject to heavy frost after new shoot growth has begun after pruning, roses can be severely set back. If you live in a frost prone area it is a good practice to delay pruning until after the danger of frost is over.

PLANTING ADVICE

Sandy soils have the virtue of free drainage, but it's also their greatest fault. Organic soil additives improve the water holding capacity of sand, at the same time forming chemical bonds with plant foods. Both moisture & fertiliser are held in a reservoir right where the plant can use them.

Peat is a most effective long term soil improver. There are a number of local peat bogs producing a fine, black material. This is available under the label Waldecks Pure Peat.

The addition of a portion of well rotted animal manure or Bio-ganic is also recommended, it adds humus to the sand as well as a very mild, slow releasing fertiliser. Blending one part of peat, one part manure and one part original sand will make a rich planting mix. Alternatively an easy mix is one part Bio-ganic to 1 part sand. A favourite animal manure for roses is sheep.

How do you prepare loam or clay soils for successful rose growing?

The interesting fact is that the same additives mentioned above work very well in heavy soils for very different reasons. Peat and Bio-ganic open up clay soils allowing better air penetration and water drainage. These materials also encourage soil micro-organisms which are very beneficial to plant growth.

In poorly drained, sticky clay soils the use of gypsum, sometimes sold under the name 'clay breaker', is beneficial. While gypsum has no nutritional value it does open up the soil, making it more friable.

Many new roses suffer as a result of fertiliser burn when first planted. Young roots should not be exposed to concentrated, fast release fertilisers. For this reason it is recommended that ordinary fertilisers are not used at planting time. Once the rose has shown positive signs of a successful transplant, then a light application of Waldecks Premium All Purpose Plant Food sprinkled over the soil surface will suffice. Slow release fertilisers can be used in the planting hole when planting new roses, but use as directed on the packaging.

It is also not a good idea to rake or dig this fertiliser in. Roses have most of their feeder roots very close to the soil surface and resent being cut or chopped around while in active growth. Just water the fertiliser in and mulch thickly, keeping the mulch away from the stem.

PLANTING DEPTH

There is a danger in deep planting where the bud union is below the soil surface. Roots can begin to grow from the stem above the bud union which will result in a weakened plant. We recommend leaving a clearance of 2 to 3 cm between the base of the bud union and the soil. To be safe always plant the rose in the soil at the same level it was at in the pot. Empty your pot, enrich the soil you have removed from the planting hole and backfill so that the rose sits at its original height above the ground. Back fill around the root ball with the improved mixture and gently press the soil down with your fingers.

Consolidating the soil and watering are very crucial to transplanting success. If air pockets are left around the roots the result can be the death of those exposed roots. The plant can often survive, but it may be crippled for life, just limping along with poor growth and flower production..

WATERING

Two or three deep soakings initially will consolidate the soil, remove air pockets and link the potting soil with the planting mix.

Thereafter water every second day in Summer and only if the soil dries out completely while the plant is dormant. Mulching thickly, but away from the stem may even extend this to less frequent watering once the rose is established

FEEDING

We recommend any of the fertilisers developed specifically for roses which include micro-nutrients. Controlled or slow release fertilisers are especially effective as they can be applied twice a year. Good for lazy gardeners. Liquid fertilisers are excellent when used regularly to give your roses that extra boost in flowers and health..

With careful preparation and planting roses will grow in your garden with complete success and continue to delight you for a lifetime.

Happy rose growing.