

Winter Rose Care

Planting Time

The winter planting season's stock of the latest and greatest rose varieties arrives in garden centres in early June. Loads more are available via mail order and the internet. If you buy bare root roses, carefully remove the packaging, trim any damaged roots, then soak in a bucket of water while you prepare the ground.

Choose a sunny location with good air flow. Stagnant humid air is very attractive to pests and diseases. Avoid soil where roses have grown previously. Find a new planting site or dig a large hole and backfill with fresh soil.

Roses give their best in soil which holds onto its water. Provided it's sufficiently drained, a clay based soil is ideal. Any soil will be improved by digging in loads of compost. Alternatively for each rose bush you plant, add a bucket load of compost to a generous sized planting hole and mix it through with slow release fertiliser.

Suggested Products: Living Earth Compost – available in bulk and bags from Central Landscape Supplies – pick up or delivery – free loan trailers.

On very heavy soils which are poorly drained, roses will do well in raised beds filled with top quality top soil. Any planting mix must have good water holding capacity.

Suggested Products: Screened Topsoil, Living Earth Garden Mix, Nutrasoil

Plant roses so that the bud union sits just above ground level. Fill and firm the soil around the plant and water thoroughly. Trim each branch with slanting cuts just above an outward facing bud. Cover the soil after planting with a 5 to 10cm layer of organic mulch.

Suggested Products: Premium Mulch, Bark Mulch, Reharvest Coloured Mulches

Winter pruning

July is the main pruning time for roses, but wait until August in very cold climates.

Using a clean, sharp pair of secateurs, remove dead or decaying wood first. Next remove the oldest branches and those crossing over each other or growing towards the centre of the bush. Finally shorten the remaining canes, cutting back to an outward facing bud. Cuts are made on an angle about 5mm above the bud. The angle of the cut should slope away from the bud to prevent water running into it. While harsher pruning can mean fewer blooms, too little pruning leads to poorer quality, smaller blooms.

Winter clean up

Clear away all leaf debris and surrounding weeds which provide a refuge for the perpetrators of next summer's pests and diseases. Spray after pruning with a copper spray mixed with spraying oil. The oil will get rid of over-wintering insect eggs while the copper kills disease spores.