

Rose Requirements: A Twelve-Step Guide



Which of your ornamental plants has at least three bloom periods May through October? Not many, are there? Many roses give us at least that much. We should "return the favor" by giving them the best of care.

If you're shopping for new plants, settle for nothing but the best stock - number 1 grade - from a reputable grower. Although the time frame for planting them is limited, buying dormant bare-root plants should afford you a better selection of varieties. Available only when dormant, bare-root roses may be planted at any time in climates where winter lows do not fall below 10 degrees F; only in early spring or late fall where the minimum winter temperatures are between 10 and minus 10 degrees F; and in early spring only, where winter temperatures go

below minus 10 degrees F.

To grow successfully, roses require:

1. a sunny location
2. good air circulation
3. well-drained, enriched soil of the proper pH
4. careful planting
5. proper pruning
6. regular fertilizing
7. adequate water
8. appropriate cutting/deadheading
9. a consistent program of preventing and controlling disease
10. protection from insects when necessary
11. suitable winter protection
12. protective fencing or caging if necessary

Location, location, location! Morning sun is essential, so that moisture on leaves dries off quickly, lessening the opportunity for diseases to take hold. From spring through fall, roses need at least 6 hours of sun per day; most would prefer more.

Like that critical morning sunlight, good air circulation helps reduce the risk of disease. Space miniature roses at least 10 inches apart; give floribundas and hybrid teas a good 2 feet; and grandifloras 3 feet. Determine the

ultimate height of shrub roses and use two-thirds of that as the spacing requirement. Climbers should have 10-foot spacing.

A slightly acid soil with a pH between 6.5 and 6.8 helps make the major nutrients (phosphorus, potassium, calcium, and magnesium) more available to your plants. In soil with a low pH (very acid), roses may experience toxicity problems with aluminum, iron, manganese, and zinc; low soil pH affects flowering and shoot and root growth. A soil test will help determine the current pH of the soil in an area of the yard which you are considering for a rose bed.

Planting beds or holes should ideally be prepared months in advance. For advice on **planting roses**, consult the American Rose Society's website.

You'll find most maritime Northwest rose growers **pruning** established roses in late February or early March. See Washington State Master Gardener FAQs on Flowers.

Fertilize new roses about a month after planting, or when they start showing growth. Begin annual fertilization of established roses in March in the maritime Northwest, (when new growth begins to appear); give the last application of fertilizer containing nitrogen in late July or early August. Read the Olympia (Washington) Rose Society's recommendations, those of the American Rose Society, and Heirloom Roses' "Louise's Question and Answer Page", questions 8, 9 and 10.

Jolene Adams addresses the topic of proper **watering** in her article, [Water, and Why!](#), on the American Rose Society's website. Provide 2 to 3 inches of organic mulch, at least part of it **well-aged** manure. This will help conserve moisture, keep plant roots cool, control weeds without using chemicals, and release nutrients each time you irrigate. Keep the mulch about 6 inches away from the base of the plant.

The [American Rose Society](#) gives very specific advice on [cutting or "deadheading" roses](#) and on [integrated pest management](#).

It is difficult if not impossible to avoid having to deal with black spot, rust, and powdery mildew if you grow roses in the maritime Northwest. For an intelligent approach to prevention and treatment of these diseases, we recommend Washington State and Oregon State University Cooperative Extension websites. Select in turn, **Ornamentals, Rose**, and then **the name of the disease** in which you are interested, at Washington State University Cooperative Extension's [HORTSENSE](#) website.

As you read the list of products recommended for treatment of a particular disease at the Oregon State University's *Pacific Northwest Plant Disease Management Handbook*, be aware that only those followed by the letter **H**, outlined by a small square, are registered for use by homeowners (as opposed to commercial growers). Click on the disease which you wish to research: [black spot](#); [rust](#); [powdery mildew](#). If cultural controls are not adequate in your situation and you find it necessary to use chemicals, try to prevent the development of resistance to a particular disease in your roses by alternating two products with different modes of action.

Aphids are attracted to the new shoots of roses, especially when an excess of nitrogen fertilizer has been used. Visit [Gardening in Western Washington](#).

Fall care for roses in the maritime Northwest consists of tying up and/or light pruning to keep canes and vines from being damaged by winds. Mulch over the graft union at this time, also. Larry and Lou Little of Vancouver, Washington, have written the American Rose Society's articles on [winterizing roses](#).

You may need to protect your roses from hungry rabbits and/or deer. A fence enclosing the rose garden, or a small-mesh wire cage around each plant, provide the best defense.

Implement all this advice and we guarantee you a rosy future, indeed!