

Growing Roses In Containers

Many roses can be successfully grown in containers. Exceptions would be large climbers and hybrid teas, ramblers and some of the big old garden roses and shrubs. However even some of the bigger plants will grow trouble-free for two or three years until the root systems outgrow the container.

The most important considerations in growing roses are in a) plant selection and b) choice of container. Smaller hybrid teas, floribundas, small grandifloras, small repeating old garden roses, small to medium shrubs and all of the miniature, mini-flora and micro miniature roses are worth attempting. There are almost always exceptions to the rule. Some hybrid teas occasionally will not do well, and for no obvious reason. Don't be concerned about this however, as there are many hybrid teas available which will do just fine. Appropriate sizes for containers would be 22" w x 16" h and 28" w x 18" h. The smaller is cedar and the larger is a one-half whiskey barrel. There are also containers in plastic replicating wood in these sizes. Ceramic, clay or plastic pots should be a minimum of 18" x 18". Clay pots will often break under significant or prolonged frost conditions. We have wooden containers that are still in good use after 15 years. Smaller cedar pots 16" x 16" will do quite well for any of the miniatures except for a few of the mini climbers and some of the mini-floras, which grow better in the next larger size.

There are two other challenges to growing roses in containers. Container plants need much more attention to watering. In continual or frequently hot and windy weather it will be necessary to water daily or every second day. Water should drain out of the bottom of the container every time. At the same time drainage is also critical. While roses need to be well-watered during summer growing months, they will perform very poorly or die if the root system has "wet feet". Some containers have only one drainage hole and often-times will have no drainage hole. One-half whisky barrels will have no holes. In a container this large drill five 3/8" holes in the barrel's side very near the bottom. If the holes are in the bottom of the barrel they will eventually become clogged and will not drain. In the larger ceramic or clay pits drill five 1/4" holes using a masonry bit. All containers should be elevated off the ground, deck, patio, etc. We've found that four small bricks spaced equally and leveled provide a stable base and assist in proper drainage. Clay feet are available which also work well on decks, patios, balconies, etc.

Feeding container roses is critical for healthy foliage and root systems. If you don't feed the container roses you will get few or no blooms. As many of the nutrients in feeding are washed on through by regular watering, feeding more often is necessary. There are a number of excellent organic products which perform well in containers without accumulating soluble salts. Collecting and using rain water from down spouts also reduces salts. Because roses are voracious feeders (and especially so in containers) instead of feeding once a month as might be recommended on the package, cut the amount in half and feed twice monthly. Typical organic rose food will be nitrogen 5%, phosphate 6%, potassium 3%, calcium 8% and sulfur 10%. Also included are beneficial mycorrhizae and various species of bacillus, all of which contribute significantly to vigorous and healthy plants with lots of gorgeous blooms. Always water thoroughly prior to feeding.

Planting roses in containers is slightly different from growing them in the ground. Fill the pot using only a balanced potting soil. They consist of nearly all organic materials that are helpful to plants getting started. These products

also perform very well in both retaining some moisture and draining the excess. A soilless potting medium will consist of the appropriate amount of beneficials including alfalfa and kelp meal, bat guano, composted chicken manure, composted wood shavings, mushroom compost and redwood compost.

There are many advantages to planting roses in containers. Pots can be moved to take advantage of the ideal amount of sun per day, which is usually 6 hours. Conversely when temperatures soar and hot, windy and drought-like conditions persist, pots can be moved to partial shade. Moving pots to viewing areas like decks, patios, steps and along paths or walkways helps to change your garden's appearance and appeal. Moving plants into "winter quarters" out of heavy freezing and drying winds is easy with container plants. Elevating smaller container plants to table height is an advantage if working at ground level becomes physically difficult. Container grown miniatures, mini-floras and micro miniatures are easily maintained in this way.

Literally several hundred different roses are likely to be successful grown in containers. Miniatures, Mini-Floras and Micro Miniatures All should do well. Here are a few to be considered.

Hybrid Teas

Cabana
Dainty Bess
Dianna, Princess of Wales
Elle
Falling in Love
Fragrant Cloud
Pope John Paul
Peter Frankenfeld
Secret

Floribundas

Brilliant Pink Iceberg
Burgundy Iceberg
Day Breaker
Ebb Tide
Ice Berg
Mardi Gras
Margaret Merril
Sexy Remy
Sunsprite

Grandifloras:

Catalina
Crimson Bouquet
Lagerfeld
Love
Southern Belle
Tournament of Roses

Shrub Roses:

Knock Out series (6 different plants)
Abbaye de Cluny
Geoff Hamilton
Golden Celebration
John Clare
Bonica

Polyanthas:

Betty Prior
China Doll
Crystal Fairy
The Fairy

Old Garden Roses:

Blanc de Coubert
Gruss an Achen
Paul Neyron
Rose de Rechst
Reine Victoria
Souvenir de la Malmaison