



# growing *Roses*

SOME HELPFUL TIPS FOR BEAUTIFUL BLOOMS

WRITTEN BY ROBYN ROEHM CANNON

**F**or centuries, the ubiquitous rose has been loved and desired more than any other flower. This simple and fragrant bloom that comes in every color of the rainbow has inspired poets and lovers—and it has both charmed and frustrated many a gardener.

A common myth is that roses are fussy and hard to grow. But, thanks to today's improved hybrids—sturdy varieties that bloom repeatedly and resist disease—the rose is one of the easiest flowers to propagate. So if you've ever wanted to grow beautiful roses but haven't added them to your garden because you didn't believe you had the skills, read on—and think again! By following a few simple tips, you'll soon share armloads of blooms with your friends and neighbors and fill your home with luscious, intoxicating scents.

There are three simple basics to remember: First, roses need at least six—and preferably eight—hours of sun each day. Second, roses prefer rich, loamy soil. Third, roses need to be watered frequently, but they cannot stand in water, even during the winter when they are dormant. Good drainage, airflow, and ventilation are essential for healthy plants.

There are many types of roses, so take a look at your garden and choose ones that are right for your climate. Floribundas are easier to care for than hybrid teas and produce large clusters of blooms from June until severe frost hits. They are great for mass plantings and most are very fragrant. Hybrid Tea Roses come in a wide variety of colors and most are fragrant. They are everblooming if you deadhead the spent flowers, and they make perfect centerpieces or bouquets with their large, spectacular

blooms. Grandifloras are perfect for beginner rose growers, because they quickly grow heavy foliage and profuse blooms. Climbing Roses produce very little growth from the base and need a trellis in order to thrive. Creeping Roses or Groundcover Roses are extremely hardy and do very well in extremely cold climates. They can be cut back severely to bloom again and again.

### When to Plant

If your winter temperatures stay above 10 degrees Fahrenheit, you can plant your roses when it is cool outside and they are dormant. But if you live where the thermometer plunges below zero, wait until the ground is thawed and warm in the early spring and there is no chance of frost.

### Where to Plant

The best location is one that receives filtered morning sunlight. The early light is gentler and allows the dew to burn off early in the day, which prevents leaf mold and other diseases. Give your plants lots of space to flourish—3 feet apart will give you the best results. Climbers require at least 6 feet of space to keep the roses from overtaking one another.

### Soil and Fertilizers

If you grow grass, annuals, or perennials, you already have the mineral-rich soil that you need. Surprisingly, if you have rocky soil, your roses will be happy—the rocks give excellent drainage. Be sure to add compost or peat moss to the hole when planting. If you are creating a garden dedicated to roses, spread your fertilizer at the rate of 4 pounds per 100 square feet. Then check with your local nursery for good recommendations on the fertilizers you'll need throughout the year to increase the nitrogen, sodium, and potash levels in your soil. You'll want to fertilize twice during the growing season: once in the spring

after the first growth and again in mid-summer. Never fertilize in the fall, as plants are preparing to go dormant.

### Successful Planting

Rose roots don't like to be cramped, so dig your hole so the roots can stretch to their full length. If they are bare root plants, soak them in lukewarm water overnight to fully hydrate before planting. Trim away any broken or damaged roots and spread the roots in the hole. If you live in a four-season climate, bury the graft knob of the plant 1 inch below the ground, or in a warmer climate, plant the graft knob 1 inch above ground. Tamp down the soil all around the roots. Water well and allow the water to soak into the tamped soil. Add more soil to cover the roots even with the ground. Leaving a half inch of stem above any bud formation and using an angled cut, prune the rose branches back to 6 inches. Use a sterile and very sharp pruning shear, and dip it in bleach water between cuts. Treat the ends of the cuts with wound compound to aid in healing. If you do plant in the fall, pile straw around the roots, to 1 foot in depth. In the spring, remove the straw after all danger of frost has passed.

### When, How, and Where to Cut

Never prune your roses in the winter. Instead, wait until spring when you see signs of new growth, and prune back all the dead branches. Cut out the stragglers that grow very long, deadhead any spent flowers during the growing season, and always cut roses in the early morning when moisture level and sugar content are the highest. Cut 1 inch above a five-leafed cluster at an outward-facing angle to encourage strong and repeated blooms.

Growing roses can be a gratifying experience. Relax and enjoy the gorgeous flowers that spring forth from your efforts, and remember to stop and smell the roses. ■

