

Information Source: Roses. Nebraska Cooperative Extension EC79-1206C

Selection

What is a good rose to grow in Nebraska?

There are many types of roses and hundreds of cultivars to choose from. Ask local rose growers, garden centers, or Master Gardeners for their suggestions. Know what you want in a rose. What function will it serve in your landscape? Characteristics to consider are winter hardiness (zone 4 or 5 depending on where you live in Nebraska), disease resistance, plant size, blossom color, time of bloom, fragrance, and rose type (hybrid tea, species, climbing rose, etc.).



Soil Preparation

What type of soil do roses need?

Well drained, sandy loam soils high in organic matter content with a slightly acid pH. Some roses tolerate poor soils. Sandy soils tend to dry out at a faster rate and have lower fertility. Soils high in clay tend not to drain well or allow for rapid root establishment.

Can sand be mixed into soil to improve drainage?

The most effective way to improve soil is by adding organic matter; i.e, spread a three inch layer of well rotted compost over the soil surface and evenly incorporate it to a depth of eight inches. Organic matter improves the water holding capacity of sandy soils and drainage of clay soils. Adding sand to improve drainage is not recommended.

Soils Best Management Check List:

- ✓ Have a soil test taken to determine pH, organic matter content, and some nutrient levels.
- ✓ Do not add amendments such as lime or gypsum without having a soil test done first.
- ✓ When improving soils prior to planting, improve the entire planting bed and not just the soil within the planting hole.
- ✓ Incorporate well rotted organic matter to improve soil texture.
- ✓ Use organic mulch to reduce compaction and to maintain even soil moisture & temperature.

Planting/Transplanting

When is the best time to plant or transplant roses?

Plant bare root or dormant root stock in early spring. Transplant roses in early spring just before new growth begins. Container grown roses can be planted at any time, but spring is preferred. If the rose is grafted, place the bud union (graft) 1.5 inches below the soil surface. Always dig the hole wider than the root ball to encourage outward root growth.

What is the best location for planting roses?

Full sun all day long is best. A minimum of 6 hours per day is needed. A location with good air movement is important to keep the foliage dry to reduce foliar diseases.

Watering

How much should roses be watered?

Roses need at least one inch of water per week. Some types of roses in some sites may need two inches per week during hot weather. This would be about 4 to 5 gallons per week. Infrequent deep watering is better than frequent light watering to help promote deeper roots better able to survive summer droughts and winter freezes. Water every 4 to 7 days during the summer when needed, moistening the soil to a depth of eight inches at each irrigation.

Watering Best Management Checklist:

- ✓ Check the soil before watering to be sure moisture is needed and to avoid overwatering. Soils need to be moist, but not saturated for healthy root growth.
- ✓ Avoid wetting leaves during irrigation as this promotes foliar diseases.
- ✓ Water during the early morning hours when wind and evaporation rates are lowest.
- ✓ Be sure water is soaking into the soil and not running off the site.
- ✓ Use a 2 to 4 inch layer of coarse, organic mulch (i.e. wood chips) to conserve soil moisture.

Fertilizing

What's the best type of fertilizer to use for roses?

Use a nitrogen fertilizer or a complete fertilizer if a soil test indicates a need for phosphorous or potassium

How often and when should roses be fertilized?

This depends on the type of rose. Hybrid tea, grandiflora, and floribunda roses are heavy users of nitrogen. Old fashioned, shrub or Rugosa roses require less nitrogen. For heavy users, make three applications during the growing season for vigorous growing roses. Make the first application in early spring just as the bush is leafing out. Make the second application in early June or as the roses begin to flower. Make the third application in early August in eastern Nebraska and mid-July in western Nebraska. Avoid fertilization after early August to allow plants to harden off for winter.

Mulching

Should roses be mulched during summer?

A two to four inch layer of organic mulch placed over the soil of rose beds will conserve moisture and reduce weed growth. Use a coarse mulch, such as wood chips, that allows oxygen into the soil. Keep the mulch 6 inches to 1 foot away from the rose stems.

Pruning

When do you prune roses?

The time to prune depends on the type of rose. Prune shrub roses in spring after winter protection has been removed and just as new growth begins. Prune ramblers and vigorous climbing roses soon after flowering. Prune hybrid climbers and everblooming large flower climbers when they are dormant. Prune old-fashioned or species roses after they have bloomed. Prune repeat bloomers when dormant.

How do you prune a shrub or bush rose?

For shrub roses, remove winter killed portions of the canes (branches) down to the nearest healthy bud. Make the cut at least one inch below the dead area. Also cut out weak, spindly, or deformed growth and canes growing towards the center of the plant. When pruning a cane, make the cut one-half inch above a healthy bud that grows to the outside of the stem.

How do you prune a climbing rose?

Cut out diseased or dead canes. Most climber canes are good for only 2 – 3 seasons, so remove older, gray canes as well as thin-diameter new ones. Save the young healthy canes. On vigorous climbers, cut laterals, branches growing off of canes, back to 8 to 10 buds and shape the plant as desired. Be sure to remove any suckers growing from below the graft union. For less vigorous climbers, only winter killed canes need to be removed.

How do you prune an Old-fashioned or Species rose?

After blooming, reduce the length of long canes by 1/3 and the lateral canes, or side branches, by a few inches.

Winter Protection

Which roses need winter protection?

In Nebraska, hybrid tea, grandiflora, floribunda and some cultivars of miniature roses need winter protection.

How do you protect roses over winter?

Winter injury is caused by cold temperatures, desiccation or drying of plant tissue, and heaving of young plants from soils freezing and thawing during winter. Winter protection begins with good summer care. Correct watering, fertilizing and pest control results in vigorous plants better able to withstand winter conditions.

Most roses are protected by covering them. The key is to wait until the plant is hardened off and temperatures are cold. Mound 8 inches of soil around the base of roses after soil temperatures have cooled in late fall to protect the plant crown. Use a well drained soil for this rather than one high in clay. After mounding, moisten the soil mound. After the soil is frozen, apply coarse mulch. One method is to place a ring of chicken wire around the rose and fill the ring with coarse tree leaves, straw, or wood chips.