

## Using Roses in the Landscape

(Source: UK publication ID-118)

When deciding where to plant roses in your yard, you must understand their needs and potential. Consider the height, growth habit (spreading, bushy, upright, tall, short), and color of the cultivar you have chosen. Most roses can be spaced 2 to 4 feet apart. Shrubs and old-fashioned roses should be 4 to 6 feet apart, and climbers along fences should be 8 to 10 feet apart. Most important, roses need good drainage and sunshine.

When selecting your site you should consider:

- Full sun is best for your roses, although six to eight hours is sufficient (preferably morning sun).
- Good drainage in your soil is a must. If your soil doesn't drain well naturally, enhance its porosity by adding abundant organic matter or small pea gravel.
- Almost any soil type is fine for growing roses as long as it is well-drained and well-aerated. When water is added to the planting hole, it should drain freely and certainly should be gone in two hours. If not, you have a problem.
- If heavy soil needs to be modified, use one-half to one-third native soil and one-half to two-thirds fully composted organic matter (well-rotted manure, leaf mold, compost) to increase aeration, drainage, and water-holding capacity. The entire planting area should have similar soil modification, not just the planting holes.
- Soil pH should be 6 to 6.8. A soil test submitted to the Henerson County Extension Office will determine whether lime and fertilizer are needed to produce attractive roses on the site you have selected.

## Planting

The most appropriate time to plant roses is early spring, when the plants are not leafed out and the ground is not frozen. Follow these planting steps. Dig the planting hole to accommodate roots and keep budded area at the soil line. This is usually 15 to 18 inches deep.

- Incorporate superphosphate into your soil (to provide slowly available phosphorus) at a rate of three to four pounds per 100 square feet or one heaping tablespoon per plant.
- Spread out the roots of the rose plant over a cone of soil located in the center of the planting hole. This will prevent air pockets from forming around the roots.
- Make sure the **budded area is at the soil line**. This prevents undesirable suckering from the rootstock (the plant portion below the grafted bud).
- Add half the soil backfill and gently firm soil around roots with hands to ensure

root-to-soil contact. Water as you add backfill.

- Fill the planting hole to within 1 to 1 inches of the original soil surface.

## Care After Planting

### Watering and Fertilizing

Roses perform best when they are well-watered. Rainfall often does not meet the plants' needs. Add water when the upper 1 to 2 inches of soil is dry.

Fertilizers with an analysis such as 5-10-5 or 4-12-4 are commonly packaged as rose fertilizers; however, 8-8-8, 10-10-10, 12-12-12, or other garden fertilizers may be used. **High-nitrogen turf materials, such as 25-10-10 or 33-0-0, should be used sparingly.**

In a rose bed, apply about  $\frac{1}{2}$  cup of 12-12-12 (or correct amount of other fertilizer analyses) per bush. Spread fertilizer evenly and scratch it into the soil surface. Application should be made to wet soils, before rain or watering.

Fertilize first in spring after danger of frost is past and pruning is completed. Then fertilize every four to six weeks until early August. Shrubs that bloom once should be fed only in mid April.

### Pruning

In the spring remove all dead wood and any canes that are diseased, broken, or injured in any way. Prune to improve the shape of the plant and to permit air movement through it by removing branches that cross through the center of the plant or rub other branches. Also remove suckers from the rootstock and thin, weak growth. Generally, pruning back to one or two outward-facing buds or branches per cane encourages growth to the outside and creates an open, vase-shaped bush. It also allows good air circulation to reduce fungal diseases. Remember, do not prune healthy shoots of climbers until after flowering.

All cuts should be clean and smooth, so make sure the pruning shears are sharp. Place a drop of white glue (e.g., Elmer's) on top of each cut stem that is larger than  $\frac{1}{2}$  inch. Glue helps reduce borer infestation into the cane.

### Mulching

Mulches help control weeds, keep roots cool, reduce the need for watering, and make the planting more attractive. Apply 2 to 3 inches of aged sawdust, wood bark, or other organic materials. Placing a few sheets of newspaper under the mulch increases the effects of mulching. Don't place mulch against the stem; keep it about 6 inches away.

If you have other gardening/landscape questions or you are interested in classes at the Extension Office, please call us at 826-8387 or e-mail Mike Keen at [mkeen@uky.edu](mailto:mkeen@uky.edu). We are also on the web at <http://ces.ca.uky.edu/henderson>.

Educational programs of the Kentucky Cooperative Extension Service serve all people regardless of race, color, age, sex, religion, disability or national origin