

Spring & Summer Rose Questions

Frequently asked questions about caring for roses in the spring and summer months



When should I prune my roses?

This depends on your elevation and exposure. In the Denver area, you can begin pruning as soon as late April. Those living in more exposed areas or higher elevations should prune near mid-May. For once-blooming roses, prune after flowering. Be sure to seal cut canes that are larger than 1/8" with nail polish to deter cane borers.

I bought potted roses grown in a greenhouse. Can I plant them now?

Potted roses grown in greenhouses need to be acclimated to the elements. This means placing roses outdoors in the morning sun over the course of 6-8 days to minimize frost or burn damage. Bring roses inside only if nighttime temperatures go below 40°F. Do not keep roses indoors for longer than a few days. After this, plant and prune back by 1/2 their height so that root growth is stimulated.

How deep should I plant my roses?

In Colorado, it's recommended to dig the hole deep enough so that the knob on the trunk, or the "graft", is 3" below the soil line. This is for added protection from our springtime freeze/thaw period. Ideally, a hole that is 2 times larger in diameter and depth than the rose container is recommended to promote good root growth.

How often should I water my roses?

This is dependent upon soil compaction, temperature, wind, and sloping. Roses love a big drink of water, not a little every day. In spring, wait until the top 2" of soil is dry before watering long enough to soak the top 3-4" of soil. During the summer months, allow the top 1" of soil to dry before watering.

What is the proper way to cut hybrid tea blossoms?

Hybrid teas are all about big blooms. Pruning blooming canes back helps to promote this. Look for the place where the blooming cane originates on the main stock. Visually work your way up to the second set of leaves with 5 leaflets that point toward you, and prune right above that section. Prune until 8" of the blooming cane remains from where it branches off of the main stock.

Bonus tips

Planting groups of roses together makes watering them easier. This will be especially true of the Hybrid Tea varieties. Adequate amounts of mulch (3-4") applied as a ground cover around the rose area aid in moisture retention and act as a weed barrier. Before covering with mulch, wind soaker hoses among the rose group to cut down on watering time and to prevent water runoff. Remember, as bark mulch breaks down, it depletes the soil of nitrogen. Counter this with a high-nitrogen fertilizer.

Location, location, location! Wind-protected, afternoon-shaded areas are best for most modern rose varieties. Old garden and groundcover types can endure sunnier, drier areas.