



# GROWING ROSES IN ARKANSAS

Central Arkansas Rose Society

These general suggestions for growing roses in Arkansas are provided by the Central Arkansas Rose Society.

For more information, please visit our website: [www.CentralArkansasRoseSociety.com](http://www.CentralArkansasRoseSociety.com)

## LOCATION:

Roses do well in full sun. Choose a well-drained spot that has at least six hours of daily sunlight and not too close to large trees or hedges.

## TIME TO PLANT:

Plant bare-root roses in February or early March. Roses in pots may be planted anytime. Transplanting should be done when roses are dormant.

## PREPARATION OF BEDS:

Careful preparation of rose beds pays off in beautiful blooms and healthy bushes for many years. For best drainage, beds should be built above ground and made of landscape timbers, railroad ties, concrete retaining wall blocks, etc. Soil for beds should be a mixture of 1/3 organic material (compost, well-rotted manure, Canadian peat moss), 1/3 sand and 1/3 original soil or sandy loam. Super phosphate and/or gypsum may be added. Allow mixture to "ripen" and settle several weeks. The mixture should be turned several times with a garden fork to develop an even mixture with good air space and water-holding capacity.

## PLANTING:

For potted roses, dig a hole large enough to accommodate the root ball. Place in the hole and water well. After water has soaked in, finish filling the hole with soil.

For bare-root roses, choose good quality plants which have not dried out in shipment or storage. If bare-root roses cannot be planted immediately, store in a cool (not freezing) place. Keep moist. Soak roots for a couple of hours before planting, but not longer than 24 hours. Dig a large hole approximately 15 inches wide and 18 to 24 inches deep. Give roots plenty of room. Build a cone-shaped mound in the bottom of the hole and spread out the roots on the mound. Be sure the bud union is at ground level or one inch below. Fill the hole about half full of dirt, then fill the hole with the plant with water again. Mound up the soil or mulch around the canes until the roots are established to prevent the canes from drying out. Carefully remove the soil from canes when new growth begins and chance of freezing temperatures has passed.

## WATERING:

A general rule for watering is that roses require two inches of water per week. In the summertime, the ground dries out more quickly. Water thoroughly and deeply twice a week. Slow soaking on the ground is best.

## FEEDING:

Roses thrive on light regular feedings. Begin a feeding program when new growth begins in the spring and continue through Labor Day. Well-rotted manure is excellent. Well-balanced (13-13-13) commercial fertilizers do well. Water-soluble rose food such as Miracle Grow, Rapid Grow and Peters 20-20-20 also do well. Follow directions to prevent over-feeding. Water before and after fertilizing to avoid burning feeder roots.

## MULCHING:

A good mulch is a must in Arkansas' summer and winter. Mulch preserves moisture in the soil, protects the roots from heat and cold, and slows weed growth. Apply several inches of mulch in the later spring and replenish during the season as materials break down. Pine bark, pine needles, shredded oak leaves

and similar materials are suitable for mulch. Mulch material may be purchased from nurseries. For winter protection, mound mulch around the plant base to a depth of approximately six to eight inches.

### **PROTECTION FROM INSECTS:**

Principal insects on roses are aphids, beetles and thrips. Insecticides control most caterpillars, beetles and other leaf and petal chewing insects. Follow label directions carefully. Use extreme caution when spraying in hot weather above 90 degrees, as some sprays can burn the foliage. Spray rose beds after they have been watered well. Spider mites can be a severe problem in hot, dry weather. They cause a gradual yellowing of the leaf (bottom leaves first) which finally drop off. A plant can defoliate very quickly if not treated with a miticide. Daily washing of the underside of the leaves helps to control spider mites. Use a strong spray of water.

### **FUNGUS DISEASE CONTROL:**

Blackspot is a major enemy of rose, causing the leaves to turn yellow with black spots and drop off. Blackspot greatly weakens the bush and retards growth. Blackspot can be prevented through the use of a good fungicide. Begin the preventive program after the first leaves appear in the spring and continue every 7 to 10 days during the growing season. Follow directions carefully on the package. Powdery mildew is most common in early spring and early fall when the nights are cool and the days are warm. Mildew spreads rapidly and should be controlled as soon as possible. It appears as a white mold-like covering on the new leaves and stems. A good preventative program begun with a fungicide in early spring should be effective.

### **SPRING PRUNING:**

In Arkansas, spring pruning is usually done around mid-February to March. Pruning of old growth encourages new growth and development. Cut height of bush back by one-third. Make cuts about a quarter-inch above a five-leaf leaflet. After blooms are spent, cutting stems back to a five-leaf leaflet will encourage new growth. On a new bush, it is a good idea to cut short stems on blooms until the plant is well-established.

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Here's a recipe for a good (but non-fragrant) organic fertilizer...

#### **ALFALFA TEA**

10 Cups **Alfalfa Meal** or **Pellets**

2 Cups **Epsom Salt**

½ Cup **Chelated Iron**

2 Cups **Fish Meal** or **Fish Emulsion** (Optional)

Mix all ingredients in a 32 gallon trash can. Fill to top with water, stir and cover. Stir once or twice daily. After 3 days the mixture will not smell very good...in fact, it will stink! It is brewing...after another day or two (4 to 5 days total) the tea will be done and ready to use. Use one gallon per bush, pouring a circle at the drip line of the bush. Use about one-third gallon for miniature roses. Water well. This mixture is safe for everything else in your garden, as well as roses.