

# “Roses Are For Sharing!”

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by Annie Plowman

Many people are intimidated by roses but, really there is no need. Most roses thrive in our warm sunny climate and are easy to grow. I think the high maintenance reputation comes from the fact that so many people choose to make them a hobby and work at making their roses a true garden statement. Keeping them alive is fairly easy and with a little effort you too can make a little garden statement without becoming a rosarian. It's so nice also, to have freshly cut roses to offer to those passers-by who remark on the garden as they walk their dog or head back from the park with their little ones. Remember flowers are for sharing!

Roses love sun and they aren't water hogs. With the proper tools and a little care, you may find roses to be one of the most rewarding features in your garden with beautiful blooms to delight you from spring into fall. Garden Centers get their big shipments once a year (now) and the supply dwindles as soon as the buds start popping so, if you are in the market for new roses, it's best not to drag your feet.

Most roses, with the exception of climbing roses, like to bloom on new wood. So NOW it's time to prune your existing roses. That dramatic cutting seems scary but, trust me, as the weather warms up, you will have the most beautiful roses.

To simplify to pruning concept; you'll want to clear away old wood and old canes. You'll want to remove most of the canes from the center of the plant to maximize air flow and minimize the opportunities for disease to take hold. Wear thick long sleeves and gloves when working among roses. Take advantage of the opportunity to move among those newly cleared spaces in the flower bed to plant some nice spring flowers. Don't be afraid to continue much more moderate (light) pruning all throughout the season to encourage continuous blooming well into fall. I find the evening stroll through the garden for that light pruning to be very relaxing. Here are a few of the tools of the trade: 1) a good pair of hand pruners 2) a good pair of garden gloves

Roses like to be fertilized so if you want good bloom, keep them fed as per the instructions on the product you choose. Fertilizers are marked with three numbers. You will want to use one for roses or flowers and one with a higher second number (ex: 5-7-2). If the first number is too high in relation to the others, you may get much growth and greening but no bloom. Use the right stuff.

When it comes to fertilizing, I like to start the season (Spring) with a good multi purpose systemic product (poured around the product and absorbed into the plant) to get a good start on disease prevention, insect resistance and fertilization. Then I prefer to follow throughout the season with organic fertilizers and sprays as needed. Either way, this will always be best done in the morning. There are decent fungicides, insecticides and fertilizers in both categories.

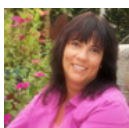
Some of you may choose to stay with one simple method of all organic or all systemic and that is certainly your choice. There is always more than one way to get good results and even the experts have their own special ideas on what is best. My take is that if you are having fun, liking what you see and enjoying it, you are doing it right!

Small populations of aphid can sometimes be controlled with a simple spray from the garden hose. Also, an occasional spray from the garden hose to remove accumulations of dust on the plant will help prevent an infestation of very pesky spider mites. Spider mites are very difficult to eradicate once they've taken up residence. Again, do this in the morning. Overhead water, especially at night, can contribute to fungus.

A few things to keep in mind, roses like sun. If you try to grow them in the shade you may not get much bloom, you may have spindly looking plants and you may have more disease issues. Also, roses are tough but aren't very forgiving when it comes to being over-watered. They can be grown in pots but it can also be a lot harder to control the water when they are in pots. You will have better luck if they are planted in the ground. Lots of yellow leaves and buds that don't open are a sure sign of over watering. Most garden centers can help diagnose problems and recommend a solution if a sufficient sample and/or good photo is brought into the nursery to examine. Trust me, that's much better than a phone call.

There are gazillions (plus or minus) of roses to choose from. Shop attributes and not specific names whenever possible. A dark pink cutting rose, with fragrance, that gets about four feet tall that will be easier to find than a specific named variety and you will increase your likelihood of shopping success.

**Happy Planting!**



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