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How to Grow Rose of Sharon



Late summer blossoms on Rose of Sharon/Hybiscus trees.

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Planting, Growing, and Pruning Rose of Sharon Shrubs

By [Andy Wilcox](#)

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Tons of flower power make the Rose of Sharon a very popular shrub. She may have a tropical vibe with big, showy blooms, but the Rose of Sharon is a hardy hibiscus that's easy to grow in much colder areas. Learn how to plant, grow, and care for Rose of Sharon.

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About Rose of Sharon

Rose of Sharon is also called hardy hibiscus and shrub althea in the South. This flowering shrub is part of the *Hibiscus* genus and is known botanically as *Hibiscus syriacus*. However, you may find hybrids labeled as *Hibiscus* X. Unlike tropical hibiscuses, the Rose of Sharon is deciduous—it will lose its leaves every autumn and regrow in spring.

Breeders have created Rose of Sharon shrubs in all sizes, from dwarf 3-4 feet tall plants to standard large shrubs, which may exceed 16 feet tall and 8 feet wide. When purchasing these hibiscuses, look carefully at the tag to verify the plant's mature size. Larger Rose of Sharon is an excellent choice for a summer screening hedge around the backyard or

Rose of Sharon is available in colors from white and lavender through pinks, reds, magentas, and purples. They can be single, semi-double, or double blooms. The classic is a single bloom with five large petals surrounding a center eye and a large column of stamens. Pollinators love finding so much pollen in a single flower!

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Flowering Rose of Sharon. Credit: Gabriela Beres

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PLANTING

Rose of Sharon enjoys full sun, although they will still grow in partial sun locations but may bloom less. They are wonderfully carefree about their soil as long as it is well-drained. Even clay soils are acceptable for these plants, and they are moderately tolerant of salt, which makes them excellent shrubs to plant near the road or driveway.

They tolerate a wide range of pH, and although they prefer loamy, slightly moist soils, most places in the yard will do. Most varieties available are cold hardy in USDA zones 5-9.

Smaller Rose of Sharon do very well in large containers and can make an excellent, colorful addition to a patio or outdoor living space. Containerized shrubs also work well for northern gardeners whose cold winters are too much for these flowering plants.

When To Plant Rose of Sharon

Rose of Sharon can be planted in either spring

ter success with spring plantings to allow roots to establish before cold weather.

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Southern gardeners can utilize fall planting, allowing the plant to establish itself after summer's heat and dry spells are over.

How To Plant Rose of Sharon

Plant Rose of Sharon shrubs like other perennials. Pay attention to their mature size and choose a spot where they'll fit into your plan as they grow. A large shrub in a small space is no fun for you or the plant.

1. Dig a hole at least twice as wide as the root ball and about as deep. Don't dig a

2. Loosen the soil in the bottom of the hole to help with drainage.
3. Water the shrub well an hour before planting.
4. Remove the shrub from its container. If it doesn't want to come loose, lay the container on its side and roll it back and forth, applying enough pressure to deform the plastic container. It should pop free.
5. Prune any circling or girdling roots. Loosen up rootbound plants by scoring the edges of the root ball with your soil knife or shovel.
6. Test fit the shrub in the hole, ensuring the plant will sit at the same level in the new spot. Don't bury it too deeply. Adjust the depth of the hole as necessary.
7. Plant the shrub and backfill the hole with the soil you removed. Don't forget to keep it upright! Pause part way and water thoroughly, then continue adding soil. Firm the soil around the roots to avoid air pockets and get good root-to-soil contact.
8. Make a slightly raised berm around the plant to keep water from running away.
9. Water your Rose of Sharon thoroughly, letting water soak into the soil.

mulch two feet from the stems and apply it 3 to 4 inches thick. Don't allow the mulch to touch the stem.

GROWING

These shrubs are not picky and, in fact, are easy to grow and low maintenance. Like other newly planted perennials, they'll need supplemental watering during the first year, especially in dry summers. Aim for one inch of water per week between rainfall and irrigation.

In better-quality soils, your Rose of Sharons won't need fertilizing. If your soil is nutrient-poor, consider fertilizing twice yearly, once in spring and again mid-summer, with a slow-release fertilizer.

Pruning is not required—your Rose of Sharon will grow on without attention—but it does encourage more blooming. Rose of Sharon blooms on new wood, meaning old, woody, gnarly branches won't put out many flowers.

To keep an established *H. syriacus* in full bloom, trim some old, woody branches back to the ground every year. Remove no more than a third of them at a time. New growth will sprout back. Pruning should be per-

plant is still dormant. Of course, broken branches can be removed at any time.

Types

Breeders have developed these shrubs as a series, with the same characteristics but available in different colors. Check out these series below, and choose a color (or several) you like.

- ‘Sugar Tip’ is a mid-sized line of shrubs with unique cream and white variegated foliage.
- ‘Satin’ is a full-sized group with an upright form reaching heights of 12 feet. Perfect for a tall privacy screen of foliage and loads of summer blooms.
- ‘Paraplu’ is a hybrid with a less rigid form and larger blooms than other varieties. They reach a medium size of about 8-10 feet tall and five feet wide.
- ‘Lil Kim’ is a dwarf line of *H. syriacus* ideally suited for small spaces. They are compact and dense, with a mature size of about 3-4 feet tall. Try them in containers for a splash of color on the patio.

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WIT AND WISDOM

- Old Rose of Sharon shrubs only blooming around the edges can be revitalized with heavy pruning. Cut back older, less vigorous stems to the ground, taking no more than a third of the plant each year.
- Pollinators may find single-bloom varieties easier to feed on than frilly double-bloom varieties. If helping pollinators is your goal, plant more single-bloom cultivars.

hardiness make checking the botanical name and other information on the tag important.

SHRUBS AND TREES

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

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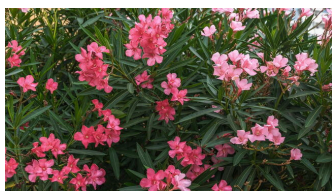


Andy Wilcox is a flower farmer and master gardener with a passion for soil health, small producers, forestry, and horticulture. [Read More from Andy Wilcox](#)

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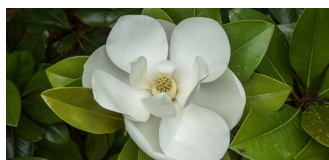
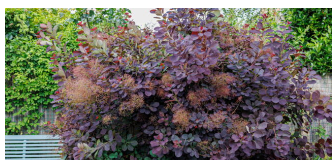
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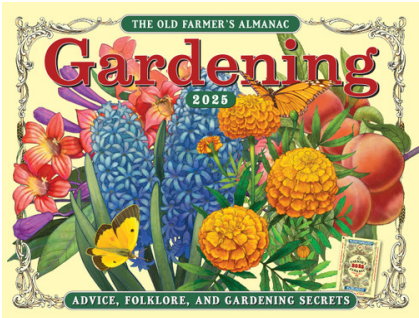
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