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Thursday, May 1, 2025



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How to Grow Roses: The Complete Rose Flower Guide



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Botanical Name:
Rosa
spp.

Plant Type:
[Flower](#)

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Planting, Growing, and Caring for Roses

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Roses are the cornerstone of many beautiful gardens and bouquets! Our Rose Growing Guide covers everything you need to know about caring for these flowering favorites—from planting to pests to pruning! How should you look after your roses?

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About Roses

June's birth flower is the rose! And it's not surprising that rose shrubs are often at their very best this month, but many types will flower from late May through early fall.

and it remains so today. Growing roses can be demanding or carefree. Roses are shrubs of many forms, available for every blooming season and in various colors. Knowing rose classifications helps understand their growth habits, climate preferences, and general requirements.

Rose bushes come in a variety of forms, from climbing roses to miniature rose plants. One way to group roses into classes is according to their date of introduction:

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- **Old roses**—also called “old-fashioned roses” and “heirloom roses”—are those

masters' paintings. Hundreds of old rose varieties—whose hardiness varies—provide warm and mild climates choices.

- **Modern hybrid roses**, introduced after 1867, are sturdy, long-blooming, extremely hardy and disease-resistant, and bred for color, shape, size, and fragrance. The **hybrid tea roses**, with one large flower on a long cutting stem, are among the most popular hybrids.
- **Species**, or **wild roses**, are those that have been growing wild for many thousands of years. These wild roses have been adapted to modern gardens and usually bloom from spring to early summer. Most species of roses have single blossoms.

[See three easy roses for beginners!](#)

Choosing from all the possibilities can be a daunting task. Take your time and wander through nurseries to enjoy the beauty of roses!

ROSE FLOWERS: PLANTING, GROWING, AND CARING FOR ROSES

Also, consider which plants make good companions for roses. Pretty purple cat-mint (*Nepeta*) offsets roses beautifully (especially pink) and hides roses' leggy bottoms, so the focus is on their lush green leaves and blooms at the top. [Lavender](#) (*Lavandula*), lady's mantle (*Alchemilla*), and tall growing pinks ([Dianthus](#)) do the same, as well as help suppress weeds. Plant other plants at least 1 foot away from your roses to avoid crowding; roses need lots of open-air circulation to avoid disease.

Plant companions can also be chosen to deter pests if you have pest problems. [Find plant companions that deter Japanese beetles here.](#)

Read Next

- [The Easiest Roses to Grow](#)
- [Best Disease-Resistant Roses](#)
- [Old Roses are Tough and Gorgeous](#)

PLANTING

When to Plant Roses

If you order **bare-root roses** from a mail-order company, order with your planting date in mind. Bare-root roses should be planted soon after they arrive.

In North America, roses are usually shipped in the early spring, well before leafing out, when plants are fully dormant. They'll look like a bundle of sticks on arrival. Note that they are not dead—simply dormant! Check that the packing material is moist and keep them in a cool, dark place until ready to plant.

- In colder regions, plant bare-root roses as soon as the soil is workable in

- In warmer regions, you may plant bare-root roses in the early spring or in late fall as long as the plant is dormant.

If you are buying **potted roses**, it's best to plant them by late spring for best results. However, you may plant them almost any time during the growing season—just be sure to keep them well-watered, especially during summer!

Selecting and Preparing a Planting Site

- Plant roses where they will receive a *minimum* of 5 to 6 hours of sun per day. Morning sun is especially important because it dries dew from the leaves, which helps prevent diseases. Roses grown in the partial sun may not die at once, but they weaken gradually, producing subpar blooms and overwintering poorly.
 - Remember that light changes as the angle of the sun shifts throughout the season. If you live in the north-

The more sun you have, the more flowers your plants will produce. In the southern half of the U.S., choose spots with a little bit of afternoon shade. This protects blossoms from the scorching sun and helps your flowers last longer.

- If you live in a colder climate, consider growing roses close to the foundation of your home. This provides plants with some degree of winter protection. Walkways are also good spots, provided there is full sun.
- If you're planning for multiple roses, be sure not to crowd. Good air circulation helps prevent fungal diseases such as powdery and downy mildew.
- Roses need soil that drains well but holds onto moisture long enough for the roots to absorb some. One of the worst mistakes you can make is to not provide adequate drainage. Roses do not like wet, cold feet.
- Roses like loose, loamy soil leaning more toward sandy. Too much clay and the roots can become waterlogged. If

- Roses prefer a slightly acidic soil pH between 5.5 and 7.0. A pH of 6.5 is just about right for most home gardens.
 - An accurate [soil test](#) will tell you where your pH currently stands. Acidic (sour) soil is counteracted by applying finely ground limestone; alkaline (sweet) soil is treated with ground sulfur. [Learn more about soil amendments](#).

Planting Roses

- Wear sturdy gloves to protect your hands from prickly thorns. Have a hose or bucket of water and all your planting tools nearby.
- Soak bare-root roses in a bucket of water for 8 to 12 hours before planting.
- Prune each cane back to 3 to 5 buds per cane. Any cane thinner than a pencil should be removed.
- If planting container-grown roses, loosen the roots before planting.
- When you plant the rose, be sure to dig a much bigger hole than you think you need (for most types, the planting

- Water liberally after planting.
- Mound up loose soil around the canes to protect the rose while it acclimates to its new site.
- Some old-timers recommend placing a 4-inch square of gypsum wallboard and a 16-penny nail in the hole to provide calcium and iron, both appreciated by roses.
- Don't crowd the roses if you plan to plant more than one rose bush. Roses should be planted about two-thirds of the expected height apart. Old garden roses will need more space, while miniature roses can be planted closer.

Propagating Roses

Create new baby rose plants from your established rose shrub! This is done by taking cuttings of the stem, dipping them in a rooting hormone, and then placing it in a small pot to grow on a sunny windowsill. [See our guide with the steps on how to propagate roses.](#)

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GROWING

Deadheading Roses

After roses bloom, be sure to deadhead religiously to prolong flowering. Every leaf has a growth bud, so removing old flower blossoms encourages the plant to make more flowers instead of using the energy to make seeds. In addition, you always want to snip off any soggy rose flowers to prevent rot from setting in.

- It's worth deadheading at least once a week and even daily in midsummer.
- To deadhead, cut back to the first leaf below the spent flower. A new shoot will then grow from this point.

• • • • •

bush that can harbor disease and
insects.

In late summer and early fall: If your rose produces good hips (rugosas), remove only the petals, so the hips can continue developing. Hips can be harvested and dried on screens, away from sunlight, then stored in an airtight container.

Stop deadheading all your rose bushes 3 to 4 weeks before the first hard frost so as not to encourage new growth at a time when the cold may damage new shoots.

Watering Roses

- Diligently water your roses. Soak the entire root zone at least twice weekly in dry summer weather. Avoid frequent shallow sprinklings, which won't reach the deeper roots and may encourage fungus. In the fall reduce the amount of water, but do not allow roses to completely dry out.
- Roses love water—but don't drown them. That is, they don't like to sit in

loose, with good drainage. One of the worst mistakes you can make is to not provide adequate drainage.

- Use mulch around your roses. To help conserve water, reduce stress, and encourage healthy growth, apply a 2- to 4-inch layer of chopped and shredded leaves, grass clippings, or shredded bark around the base of your roses. Allow about 1 inch of space between the mulch and the base stem of the plant. See our [Mulching Guide](#) for more information.



Feeding and Fertilizing Roses

- Artificial liquid fertilizers tend to promote plant growth that is soft and tender, and this type of foliage can attract

feed your plants before and throughout the blooming cycle.

- Once a month between April and July, you could apply a balanced granular fertilizer (5-10-5 or 5-10-10). Allow 3/4 to 1 cup for each bush, and sprinkle it around the drip line, not against the stem. [See our fertilizer guide for more information.](#)
- In May and June, you could scratch in an additional tablespoon of Epsom salts along with the fertilizer; the magnesium sulfate will encourage new growth from the bottom of the bush and make flower colors more intense.
- Fertilize with rabbit food; it contains alfalfa meal, which supplies a growth stimulant, nitrogen, and trace elements. Scratch 1/2 cup of pellets into the soil around a rosebush, then water well.
- Banana peels are a good source of calcium, sulfur, magnesium, and phosphates—all things that roses like. (Note that it will take longer for your roses to reap the benefits from bananas than

1. Lay a strip of peel at the base of each bush.
2. Bury a black, mushy banana next to each bush.
3. Chop up the peels, let them sit for 2 weeks in a sealed jar of water, and pour the mixture under each bush.

Pruning Roses

- In North America, repeat blooming roses such as floribunda and hybrid tea roses need heavy annual pruning, which is done in **the spring** when plants begin to leaf out for the new season. (Roses are often not the earliest plants in the garden to respond to spring's warming temperatures, so be patient.) Give the plant time to show its leaf buds, then prune above that level.
- But do **not** prune old-fashioned roses and climbers in spring. they bloom on wood from the previous year's growth. Prune in the late summer immediately

- At any time of the year, remove dead, diseased, or damaged wood and remove diseased foliage. [Learn more about common rose diseases.](#)
- When you prune, wear elbow-length gloves that are thick enough to protect your hands from thorns or a clumsy slip but flexible enough to allow you to hold your tools. Always wear safety goggles; branches can whip back when released.
- Use sharp pruning shears for smaller growth. For growth more than half an inch thick, use loppers, which look like giant, long-handle shears. A small pruning saw is handy for large and heavy, old stems, as it cuts on both the push and the pull.
- As much as two-thirds can cut back large rose canes and smaller ones to within 6 to 12 inches of the ground. In general, cutting back hard promotes stronger growth.

against each other, damaged, discolored, or competing for space. Leave only the most vigorous, healthy canes. When pruning, check to make sure the stems show no sign of discoloration.

- Prune 1/4-inch above an outward-facing bud to prevent compacted growth. Cut at an angle. Any cuts you make that are greater than the thickness of a pencil should be sealed with nail polish or wood glue to prevent cane borers from entering.
- Not all types of roses are pruned the same way or at the same time of year. Learn more here: [How to Prune Roses](#).

Winterizing Roses

- In the fall, shorten the extra-tall canes to 30 inches to reduce damage from winter winds (which can loosen and damage roots).
- Clean up the rose beds to prevent overwintering of diseases. Collect any

- Stop fertilizing 6 weeks before the first fall frost, but continue watering during dry fall weather to help keep plants healthy during a dry winter.
- Add mulch or compost around the roses after a few frosts but before the ground freezes. Where temperatures stay below freezing during winter, enclose the plant with a sturdy mesh cylinder, filling the enclosure with compost, mulch, dry wood chips, pine needles, or chopped leaves (don't use maple leaves for mulch, as they can promote mold growth).

Container roses acquired in late summer or fall can be overwintered above ground.

In northern zones, expose the plant to the first deep freeze (this helps with dormancy). Put it in a dark, unheated room, basement, or garage. Water occasionally, only enough to moisten the soil. Bring the plant outdoors when it shows signs of coming back to life. Plant when the soil warms.

In tropical climate areas (where it's never below 20°F), container roses can remain outdoors. Water regularly to keep roots alive.



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Types

Some classes of roses bloom only once a year in spring, but flowers can cover plants for more than a month. Remontant roses bloom a second time in a season, generally 50 to 60 days after the first flush of flowers.

Traditionally, roses were notoriously challenging to grow. However, roses have changed. There are now many modern easy-to-grow types of roses available. Here are some of our favorites:

These three are considered to be the easiest roses to grow:

- **Knock Out shrub roses:** continuous blooms; high disease resistance; require no spraying, dusting, pruning, deadheading; hardy to Zone 5

heading; drought-tolerant once established; minimal pruning; hardy in Zones 4 to 11

- **David Austin** climbers (to 6 feet), including ‘Gertrude Jekyll’: continuous pink blooms; strong fragrance; hardy in Zones 4 to 11
- [See 3 easy roses for beginners!](#)

Rugosa roses include a 5-foot-tall/-wide shrub, ‘Jens Munk’: pink blooms in June through August; disease-resistant; hardy to Zone 2

“Bests” are highly subjective. These roses tend to be crowd-pleasers, but choose a rose that pleases you:

- **Best pink rose**—‘New Dawn’ (the first U.S.-patented plant): blush-pink hybrid climber (15+ feet); sweet fragrance; disease-resistant; good cut flower; hardy in Zones 5 to 9
- **Best red rose**—‘Don Juan’: hybrid climber (up to 12 feet); sweet fragrance; good cut flower; spiny stems;

disease-resistant; heat-/humidity-tolerant; good cut flower; hardy in Zones 4 to 9

- **Best yellow rose**—‘Sunsprite’ (aka ‘KORresia’): 3-foot bush floribunda hybrid; fragrant; disease-resistant; good cut flower; hardy in Zones 5 to 9
- **Best rose for fragrance**—‘Pink Peace’: vigorous hybrid bush; sweet scent; large (6-inch), continuous double blooms; good cut flower; hardy in Zones 5 to 10



Flower Carpet Roses are continual bloomers dripping in flowers and require no spraying!

See also our list of [disease-resistant rose varieties](#).

HARVESTING

When inside, strip off lower leaves and re-cut the stems. Change the water in the vase every couple of days and recut the stems at the same time. Vase life is up to 12 days.

GARDENING PRODUCTS



PESTS/DISEASES

Good gardening practices, such as removing dead leaves and canes, will help reduce pests. If problems develop, horticultural oil and insecticidal soap can help control insects and mildews. Possible rose

- Japanese Beetles: See many tips for deterring these pests, including great companion plants for roses which will help prevent Japanese Beetles.
- Aphids: All plants deal with aphids which are easy to manage with a spray of water or insecticidal soap; just stay on top of your plants and check consistently.
- **Black Spot**: Rose plant leaves with black spots that eventually turn yellow have black spot. This is often caused by water splashing on leaves, especially in rainy weather. Leaves may require a protective fungicide coating, which would start in the summer before leaf spots started until first frost. Thoroughly clean up debris in the fall, and prune out all diseased canes.
- Powdery Mildew: Leaves, buds, and stems will be covered with a white powdery coating. Mildew develops rapidly during warm, humid weather. Prevent mildew by pruning out all dead or diseased canes in the spring.
- **Botrytis Blight**: This gray fungus will

material. Fungicide application may be necessary.

- **Spider Mites**
- [Thrips](#)
- [Rust](#)
- **Stem Borers**
- [Deer](#): Roses are a delectable tidbit, so try planting [lavender](#) near your roses. Not only will you have the makings of a nice potpourri, but the scent of lavender will discourage browsers. You can also spread human or dog hair around the garden area or check our [list of deer-resistant plants](#) to protect your roses.

In general, avoid rose issues by buying disease-resistant varieties and cleaning up debris, weeds, fallen leaves, and any diseased plant material as soon as possible.

Also, speak to your local [Cooperative Extension](#) or trusted nursery about a spray program with products approved in your state.

- The rose is the U.S. national flower and is honored by the annual Rose Parade on New Year's Day. They are also the [state flower of New York](#).
- Roses are edible! Rose petals are brewed for tea blends and are sometimes used in gargles and tonics to treat congestion, sore throats, and stomach disorders.
- Rose water is a refreshing skin splash. Try a flower facial! Gentle, aromatic steam cleanses your pores. For oily skin, add a few rose petals to boiling water in a heatproof bowl. Make a bath towel tent and lean your face about 10 inches above the water. It should feel warm, not hot. After 10 minutes, rinse your face with cool water, then blot dry. [Learn more about how to make rose water and rose water cream.](#)
- Red roses symbolize love and desire, but roses come in a variety of colors, and each has its own meaning. For example, the white rose's meaning is purity and innocence. [See flower](#)

- It is believed that the cultivation of roses began about 5,000 years ago in China.
- During the Roman Empire, rose gardens were established in the Middle East.
- In the 17th century, kings and queens considered roses legal tender for purchases.
- Roses have a long and symbolic history.

And I will make thee beds of roses,

And a thousand fragrant posies.

–Christopher Marlowe (1564–93)

...oses - The Old Farmer's Almanac



RECIPES



COOKING NOTES

The tart reddish-orange hips of rugosa roses are used for jams, jellies, syrups, pies, teas, and wine. Check out our [Rose Hip Jam recipe](#).

Rose petals are edible and can be tossed into salads for color, candied to decorate cakes, or distilled to make rose water. Make sure the rose petals are pesticide free.

FLOWERS

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Catherine Boeckmann



Catherine Boeckmann loves nature, stargazing, and gardening so it's not surprising that she and The Old Farmer's Almanac found each other. She leads digital content for the Almanac website, and is also a certified master gardener in the state of Indiana. Read More

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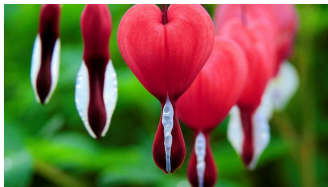
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COMMENTS

ADD A COMMENT

Dottie Cummings (not verified) 2 months 3 weeks ago

Years ago I purchased a Crimson Glory rose bush. When we moved we were unable to take it with us. I have searched everywhere and have been unable to find another. Could you help?

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REPLY

What about Rose Rosette Disease? Any way to treat? Any Roses resistant? Thanks!

REPLY

The Editors 12 months ago

Hi, Peggy,

Rose Rosette Disease (RRD) is caused by the rose rosette virus (RRV), which attacks only roses. It is transmitted by grafting (not via sap) or by microscopic eriophyid mites, especially *Phyllocoptes fructiphilus*. The mites do not crawl far, but can be blown to other roses or carried on tools, clothing, or other materials. They tend to gather near buds, flowers, base of shoots or leaf stems, and leaf scars, including over winter.

All cultivated roses are considered susceptible. Studies are being done to determine if there are resistant rose cultivars/species. At this time, there

Symptoms include witches' brooms, thickened/elongated stems, many thorns, enlarged canes, distorted leaves or flowers, reddish leaves.

Symptoms may appear months after infection. The virus may survive in the roots (not the soil), and the mites may be on parts of the plant that do not currently show symptoms.

Control ultimately is to remove a symptomatic rose, including the roots/rootball. Also keep up with deadheading spent blossoms, as mites tend to gather around there.

Always be sure to clean up all plant debris and place in the trash (not compost pile). Avoid using leaf blowers around roses, as they can blow mites onto the plants. Prune symptomatic branches; if after pruning, new growth also shows signs of disease, it is best to remove the entire plant, including rootball. Also prune heavily in late winter/early spring, when the plant is dormant, and then apply dor-

ease. A monthly treatment of horticultural oil (except in hot weather) can help. Avoid overcrowding planting sites; mixing roses with other plants can help minimize the spread of the disease. Make sure to keep plants healthy and unstressed, so that they can best fight the disease. If a rose is removed, wait at least 1 to 2 months before planting a new one in the same spot. Inspect plants often to check for symptoms.

Hope this helps!

REPLY

Debbie Maxwell (not verified) 1 year 6 months ago

When and how to I move rose bush to another location

REPLY

The best time to move a rose bush is during the dormant season in early spring after the threat of frost is over. Cut the rose canes back to 10 to 12 inches and remove any foliage so the plant can focus on root development after transplanting. Choose a new place with good drainage. Dig your hole. Remove the rose by digging far enough away from the root ball so you don't damage the roots. Take as many of the roots with you as possible and gently transfer to the new hole. If it is too large to carry, place it on a tarp and drag it to its new home. Amend the soil. In a bucket or wheelbarrow, mix equal parts mulch, potting soil, and peat moss. Add half of this mixture to the hole around the roots. Water the soil well when the planting hole is half-filled and let the water settle. Adjust the rose as needed if the soil has caused it to sink a bit. Add the remaining soil mixture and water again. Water the new rose every day for a week or two depend-

REPLY

Martha Clark (not verified) 2 years 11 months ago

Please tell me how to preserve my bouquet of yellow roses I got over the weekend.. I was told to drop an aspirin in the water

REPLY

Cindi (not verified) 2 years 6 months ago

Article re roses says to prune in the Spring but it also says to cut tall canes back to 30" in Fall. Which is it?

REPLY

The Editors 2 years 6 months ago

Major pruning and shaping should be done in the spring before new growth appears. In the fall, do minor pruning tasks such as pruning extra-long or

REPLY

The Editors 2 years 11 months ago

Hi Martha, Thanks for your question.

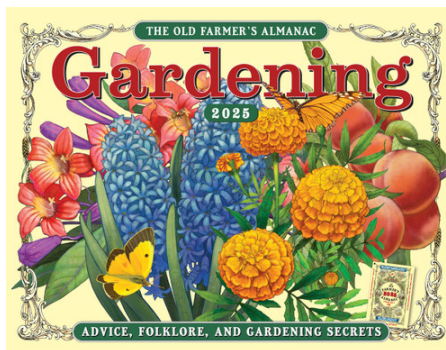
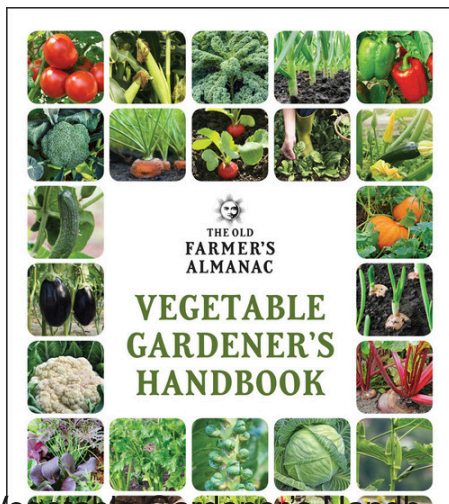
We certainly understand why you want to keep that bouquet of yellow roses looking beautiful for as long as possible. One thing you will want to do is give your roses fresh water after 4 or 5 days. Wash out the vase, rinse off the stems of any slimy residue, and give them a fresh cut at the bottom to allow for better water intake. You can also add more flower food if you have it. Another way to preserve your arrangement is to keep it cool at night—the refrigerator works great. Roses love cool, humid temperatures, so keep them away from direct heat or drafts, which will dry out your flowers.

REPLY

About 14 years ago we planted two roses, one on each side of a large Pergo archway. Over the years they have grown to the top of the structure, Last year one of them produces a branch from the base of the plant and it produced red flowers. Kind of strange as it has always produced a cream/pink flower. This year there are even more red flowers. Could this be from some lone sleeping plant DNA? I don't know, however it is quite pretty.

[REPLY](#)[MORE COMMENTS](#)

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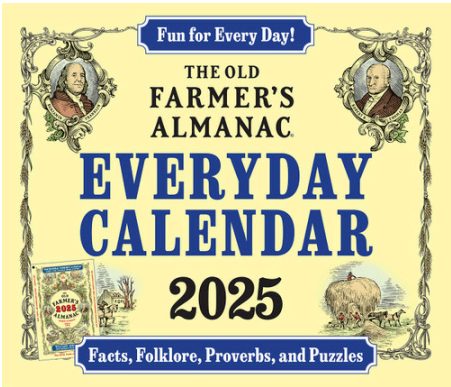
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