

Roses



QUICK FACTS

Family: Rosaceae

Latin Name: *Rosa* spp.

Common Name: rose, Queen of flowers

Growth: Shrubs, 2 to 30 feet (61cm to 9 m)

Hardiness: Many routinely hardy to Zone 6

Light: Full sun

Soil: Well-drained garden loam

Water: Moist but not constantly wet

Use: Culinary, crafts, landscape

Propagation: Cuttings or grafts



Rosa sp. Mundi
Photo: commons.Wikipedia.org

History

Man has had an intimate relationship with roses that has persisted throughout history. They are one of the oldest flowers known to man, yet still one of the most popular. Throughout generations of time, storytellers have passed on myths and legends that have fueled many of our beliefs about the meaning and symbolism of the rose. The rose has been called the flower of love, with many legends linking its blooms to the Greek goddess Aphrodite, also known as the Roman goddess Venus, and other goddesses of love.

Fossil records show that roses were around prior to the existence of man. One of the oldest fossils, discovered in the United States, dates back approximately 30-35 million years. Rose fossils have also been unearthed in Asia and Europe. Romans believed that roses symbolized love, beauty, purity, and passion.

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They used rose petals in their bath water, to decorate their homes, and to strew across the floor at banquets.



Today, rose history continues to evolve. Wonderful new varieties are available and several of the much-loved older ones still grace gardens throughout the world. Rose lovers have banded together in rose societies that are dedicated solely to the promotion of this famous flower. The rose industry continues to prosper and grow. This highly esteemed botanical treasure has played an integral role in the past and will continue to do so in the future.

Rosa canina

Photo: commons.Wikipedia.org/Luc Viatour

Culture

Most roses do best on deep, fertile, moist but well-drained soils with a pH of 5.5 to 6.5; a position that provides full sun and good air circulation helps reduce disease and insects.

Do not fertilize newly planted roses; wait four to six weeks for the plants to become established. Authorities do not agree on the type of fertilizer or the rate, only that roses are heavy feeders. Try yearly feedings of about a cupful of 5-10- 5 fertilizer per established rose bush, sprinkled in a circle around the base, supplemented with monthly feedings of fish emulsion, manure tea, or other organic sources of nutrients for maximum growth.

Do not expect typical blossoms of a species or cultivar until the second year after planting. The blooms of the first year are smaller and sparser than are typical.

Propagation

Many of the heritage roses are easily propagated by cuttings. Those that don't root easily from cuttings, such as the roses with heavy *R. gallica* ancestry, produce suckers, which are easily transplanted. The cleanliness, temperature, and humidity of the rooting chamber are of primary importance; rooting media that suffers from fungi contamination, high temperatures, or low humidity guarantees failure.

Uses

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Roses are used mainly for culinary and craft purposes. Rose essential oil is used by the perfume industry for fragrance. Rose petals can be used to make elixirs, tinctures and vinegars. In the landscape, roses can be used as feature plants or be massed together in borders.

Pruning

First, determine if the rose blooms on old or on new wood. Roses that bloom on old wood include many of the species roses and the old European roses. These are pruned more lightly in late winter. Roses such as teas, chinas, and some new shrub roses, bloom on new growth and can therefore tolerate a harder prune.

When roses are first planted they require minimal pruning. Once established, try to keep three different years of growth— current, 1-year old, 2-year old branches.

- Prune all dead, diseased, crossing and weak branches first and then step back to see what remains
- The best time to prune is in late winter just when the buds are beginning to swell, but at least one month prior to the last frost
- Cut on an angle, just above the buds that face the direction of desired growth (usually away from the plant). Do the same when deadheading.

Sources

Text taken from *The Herb Society of America's Essential Guide: Roses, 2012 Herb of Year*

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