

## READY TO PLANT? SOME MUST DO BASICS

### Site Selection

- Light:** A minimum of 6 hours of direct sunlight per day. Morning sun is best.
- Air movement** over the plant's leaves is important. Do not plant in enclosed courtyards or in areas ringed by 8 foot fences.
- Overhead irrigation** should be avoided because wet leaves contribute to mold and mildew even in an arid climate.
- Well-drained soils:** Sandy and loam soils will drain properly. Clay and caliche soils may need raised beds at least 4-6 inches above soil level. Containers and pots **MUST** have drainage holes.

### Plant and Hole Preparation

- Submerge** plant stock in water: bare-roots a minimum of 12 hours and containers two to three hours.
- Dig** a hole 2 to 3 times wider than root ball, but (**very important**) no deeper than original planting depth.
- Amend** backfill soil with organic matter and slow time-release fertilizer. Only potting soils should be used in containers.
- Spread** bare-roots over mound in planting hole. Tease or gently loosen roots on container grown stock.
- Backfill** planting hole with amended soil, press soil around root ball and water thoroughly.
- Mulch** with at least 4" of bark or other organic matter.

### Grow and Enjoy

- Fertilize** using water-soluble types applied with a sprayer or dry fertilizers, which are worked into the top layer of soil at the drip line. Times of application should be matched with rose variety.

## MORE MUST DO BASICS

- Pests and diseases** can be problems for rose bushes, but our arid growing climate helps eliminate some of these. Plant selection and proper cultivation will help with the rest.
- Deep watering**, to produce deep roots, should be applied with a drip system. Adjustments will be needed for high summer temperatures and hot desert winds, but frequent shallow watering should be avoided.
- Pruning** encourages new growth; removes dead wood; improves air circulation; and shapes the plant. The time to prune and the method used is very rose-variety specific. If you have questions, ask a Master Gardener.
- Deadheading** allows you to increase bloom time and maintain the bushes' desirable shape throughout the growing season.

## TEXAS A&M AGRI LIFE EXTENSION

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The Texas A&M System, U.S. Department of Agriculture, and the County Commissioners Courts of Texas cooperating

## TEXAS A&M AGRI LIFE EXTENSION

GARDENING IN THE DESERT SOUTHWEST PUBLICATION SERIES



## ROSES FOR THE DESERT



# SELECTING, PLANTING AND MAINTAINING ROSES IN THE DESERT

## EARTHKIND® – THE FRIENDLIEST ROSES ON THE PLANET

Who doesn't love roses? The look, the scent, the romance... **the work?!** As beautiful as the plants are, it's the maintenance that tends to scare some gardeners away. So Texas A&M University researchers set out to identify the toughest roses on the market. After a five-year study, testing more than 100 roses, they've named 21 varieties as being environmentally-friendly – without the thirst for water of other varieties and almost no maintenance.



Evaluated in Texas statewide, these winners were found to thrive in almost any soil type, from the well-drained acid sands of east Texas to the poorly aerated, highly alkaline clays of the central and southwest parts of the state. All showed good heat- and drought-tolerance, and they maintained bloom production even through searing summers. And although these beauties aren't immune to pest problems, their tolerance is so great, gardeners rarely have to use chemical pesticides.



EL PASO ROSE GARDEN, 1702 N. COPIA

## SELECTING THE PERFECT ROSE

There are 16,000 varieties of roses in commerce. There IS a rose variety for each application. Selections include:

- Bush roses, which include hybrid teas, polyanthas, floribundas, grandifloras, miniatures and heritage roses;
- Climbers and ramblers;
- Shrub and ground cover plants; and
- Tree roses.

**SIZE:** A miniature bush can be six inches tall and climbers and shrub roses can exceed twelve feet. Appropriate sizes are available whether you are planting into a container or in your landscape.

**FRAGRANCE:** The old axiom “a rose by any other name is still a rose” may be true. But no two smell the same. Some have NO smell while others are highly fragrant.

**BLOOM TIME:** Some varieties will bloom from early spring until hard frost. Others will bloom only once or twice a season.

**EFFECT:** A rose bush can be the focal point in your landscape or used for seasonal impact. A single plant will speak volumes or you can use a row of shrub roses to create a fence or to define an area in your landscape.

**USES:** Long stemmed varieties are the best for cut flowers. Some varieties produce red, orange, or yellow hips (seed pods) after flowering. These are high in Vitamin C and can be used in cooking; plus, the birds like them for winter food, and they can be used in flower arrangements.

**EARTHKIND® ROSES:** For additional information, visit the Aggie Horticulture website

<http://aggie-horticulture.tamu.edu/earthkind/roses/>

## PLANTING AND MAINTAINING ROSES

The decision to plant roses can be intimidating! Where does one start? Now that you have selected the variety of rose, some questions you might have are:

- What is the best physical location for the variety selected? Remember our dreaded “western exposure” in the desert which creates very harsh conditions for plants.
- Does this variety need fertilizer or other soil amendments? When is the best time to fertilize?
- What diseases or pests are problems for roses? Are some varieties more vulnerable to these threats?
- When is the best time to plant?
- Should I select bare-root or container-grown roses?
- How difficult is the planting process?
- Aren't roses high maintenance?
- What is the best method of pruning roses?
- Don't roses require a lot of water, which makes them a poor choice for our arid growing conditions?

A Master Gardener can answer your rose questions. Call the free El Paso County Master Gardener Hot Line at **915-566-1276**.

Plant selections can be obtained from catalogs or by surfing the internet. To help in your selection, visit the **El Paso Rose Garden**. This four acre garden is one of only 100 certified rose gardens in the US. It has a diverse selection of roses that do well in the desert. The garden is administered by the City of El Paso Parks and Recreation Dept. and is maintained by the city, the El Paso County Master Gardeners and the El Paso Rose Society.