



Growing Great Roses

"Old roses tend to be stable, long-lived, and sturdy, especially when grown from cuttings. Many show a strong resistance to black spot and other diseases. The unforgettable 'true rose' fragrance is not found in the modern hybrids. Old roses have an inherent beauty of form, a quality which does not diminish over the years. This makes them especially useful as landscape plants."

— Dr. William C. Welch

PLANTING LOCATION

Choosing the proper location to grow roses, both old roses and modern hybrids, is critical to growing beautiful, low-maintenance roses. The area should receive a minimum of six hours of sun each day — in other words, half a day or more. Some afternoon shade is beneficial for cooling during hot summer months. Air circulation is critical. An open, breezy site is much preferred over the corner of a solid wood fence. Finally, good soil drainage ensures healthy, vigorous root growth. You may want to consider a sloped area or raised bed.

SOIL PREPARATION

Most soils in South and Central Texas do not provide the essentials for growing great roses. Ample soil preparation will help you enjoy healthy roses for years to come. A loose, fertile, sandy loam is best for rose beds.

The planting bed should be amended with 4 to 6 inches of a blended mixture consisting of 2/3 sandy loam and 1/3 soil conditioner. In addition, supplement 100 sq ft of bed mix with 10 lbs of gypsum, 2 lbs of granular soil sulfur, 1 lb of magnesium sulfate, and 1 lb of commercial rose food. You can substitute or modify the commercial rose food with an all-natural plant food, typically at 4 lbs for each 1 lb of commercial fertilizer.

Topdressing the bed with 3 to 4 inches of mulch will buffer against temperature swings, conserve and retain moisture, minimize weed growth, and replenish much needed organic matter to the soil.

PLANT SELECTION

Choosing the right growth form will enhance the aesthetic value of your roses. Roses for display can be climbers, bush, or dwarf types. Roses for cutting should provide single bud stems for uniform appearance and repeat harvests.

MAINTENANCE AND CARE

Weekly watering of the soil, monthly feeding during heavy blooming, and bi-monthly control of seasonal disease and insects are normal considerations for premium blooms. Old roses recover readily when stressed by disease and insect pressures, so some gardeners elect not to spray them.

Be sure to monitor the condition of the bed mulch layer.