

Roses

Selection, Planting and Care

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It would be hard to find a flower more universally loved than the rose. Over humanity's long history with this plant, the rose has found its way into our gardens, cuisine, medicine, art and cultures. It is easier than ever to find undemanding, reliable roses that will enhance your landscape. The following information will help you decide what types of roses to grow and explain how to plant and take care of them.

Landscape Planning

When choosing roses, consider how you want to use them in your landscape and why you intend to grow them. Although traditionally they were grown together in their own beds (the classic rose garden), roses today are often incorporated into landscapes just like any other shrub. Old garden roses, shrub roses, landscape roses, polyanthas and floribundas are particularly suitable for this.

Hybrid teas and grandifloras are what you should choose if you want to grow roses with perfect flowers on long stems for cutting (although other groups of roses also produce excellent cut flowers). The long stems so great for cutting, however, make these rose bushes rather tall and awkward, and their shape does not combine easily with other plants. That, along with their exacting cultural requirements, is why these roses are often grown in separate beds.

When training roses on a trellis, arbor or fence, choose rose cultivars from the climbers, ramblers and old garden roses that produce long vigorous canes, such as the noisettes.

Maintenance is also an issue when deciding where and how many roses you want to include in your landscape. Generally, hybrid teas, grandifloras and floribundas, traditionally the most popular and widely available groups of roses, are relatively high-maintenance plants due to their susceptibility to black spot disease.

Proven Cultivars

Recent trends in what roses people grow show a move away from traditional hybrid teas and grandifloras. Instead, there is increasing interest in old garden roses and landscape/shrub roses that are more disease resistant, easier to care for and fit well into landscape beds like other shrubs.

Many roses on the market have undergone extensive testing evaluation in Louisiana and across the country. Respected organizations offer recommendations based on their studies. The following roses are reliable and relatively carefree, but represent only a small fraction of the roses available.

David Austin Roses

This is a modern group of roses that resembles the flower forms, fragrances and undemanding nature of old garden roses. Bred by David Austin in England, they are also called the English Roses.

Cultivar evaluations of David Austin roses conducted between 2003 and 2006 at the American Rose Center in Shreveport were based on flowering, growth habit, fragrance and disease resistance.

Outstanding performers included Tess of the d'Urbervilles, Benjamin Britten, Jude the Obscure, Heritage, Charlotte and Molineaux.

Above-average performers included Abraham Darby, Eglantyne, A Shropshire Lad, Charles Rennie Mackintosh and Winchester Cathedral.

All-America Rose Selections (AARS)

AARS seeks to identify the best of the newly released roses each year. In determining All-America Rose Selection winners, rose cultivars are evaluated at test gardens across the country for bud and flower form, vigor, hardiness, growth habit, disease resistance, foliage and fragrance. All of the recent All-America Rose Selections are on display in the All-America Rose Display Garden at the LSU AgCenter's Burden Center in Baton Rouge.

Recent AARS winners recommended for Louisiana include Brigadoon, Pride 'n' Joy, All That Jazz, Child's Play, Rio Samba, Knock Out, Midas Touch, Secret, Caribbean and Carefree Delight.

Additional rose cultivars recommended for Louisiana's growing conditions based on trials at the Burden Center include, but are not limited to, Pristine, Carefree Wonder, First Kiss, Peace, Queen Elizabeth, Mr. Lincoln, Sexy Remy, Unforgettable, Chicago Peace, Red Masterpiece and Grand Masterpiece.

EarthKind Roses

EarthKind is a designation given to select roses by the Texas A&M University Agriculture program. EarthKind Roses have been through rigorous Texas statewide testing and evaluation by a team of horticultural experts. Each selected cultivar was found to possess the high level of landscape performance and outstanding disease and insect tolerance/resistance required for this special designation. Some of these roses may not perform as well in Louisiana as in Texas.

Currently, the EarthKind list of cultivars include Marie Daly, The Fairy, Knock Out, Caldwell Pink, Perle d'Or, Belinda's Dream, Else Poulson, Carefree Beauty (Katy Road Pink), Duchesse de Brabant, Spice, Mutabilis, Climbing Pinkie, Seafoam.

Old Garden Roses

Old garden roses include many groups. A few groups have a history of doing well in Louisiana, and they are listed below along with a few cultivars in each group.

China Roses. These were the first everblooming roses introduced to Europe from China in the 1700s. The flowers are produced constantly and have thin, delicate petals. The foliage is neat, dark green, pointed and rarely bothered by black spot. These roses have a bushy, twiggy growth habit that fits in well with landscape plantings. They thrive in heavy clay soils. Cultivars include Archduke Charles (red blend), Cramoisi Superieur (red), Ducher (white), Louis Philippe (light red), Martha Gonzales (red), Mutabilis (yellow changing to pink then red), Old Blush (pink), Green Rose (green).

Tea Roses. These are outstanding everblooming roses for Louisiana and produce relatively large flowers in pastel shades and light reds. The fragrant flowers are produced continuously on robust bushes that are rugged and disease resistant. These roses were used to develop the hybrid teas popular today. Cultivars include Bon Silene (dark pink), Duchesse de Brabant (light pink), Mrs. B. R. Cant (red), Mrs. Dudley Cross (yellow blend), Sombreuil (white, climber).

Noisette Roses. This category was developed in America and contains mostly well-behaved climbers, although a few are robust shrubs. These everblooming roses thrive in Louisiana. The pastel flowers are fragrant and grow in clusters that hang down from the canes. Cultivars include Champney's Pink Cluster (light pink), Lamarque (white), Mme. Alfred Carriere (white), Natchitoches Noisette (light pink), Reve d' Or (pale gold).

Bourbon Roses. Though more susceptible to black spot than the previously mentioned old garden roses, many of the Bourbons thrive in the Louisiana climate. Flowers are usually quite fragrant and produced on everblooming, large, robust shrubs or climbers. Cultivars include Maggie (red), Souvenir de la Malmaison (pink), Zephirine Drouhin (pink), Boule de Neige (white), Mme. Isaac Pereire (dark pink).

Knock Out Roses

'Knock Out' is an excellent landscape/shrub rose that was an All-American Rose Selection winner in 2000. Within a short time, rose growers realized what an outstanding landscape rose it is. Amazingly disease resistant and blooming more than most roses, it became popular quickly. Variations of Knock Out with different flower colors soon followed. At this time, these cultivars are available: Knock Out (light red), Pink Knock Out (pink), Blushing Knock Out (very pale pink), Double Knock Out (red with extra petals), Double Pink Knock Out (pink with extra petals), Rainbow Knock Out (pink with yellow centers, 2007 All-America Rose Selection winner). Home Run is a similar rose.

Purchasing Guidelines

Regardless of the type or cultivar you choose, buy the highest quality bushes available. It is well worth the extra cost for a healthy, vigorous plant that will produce lots of flowers. Choose bushes that have at least three to five canes about the diameter of your fingers (although some types of roses, such as miniatures and Chinas, typically have smaller canes). Avoid bushes that show signs of damage or disease on the canes. Also, it's best if the canes radiate out away from the center in several directions, since that pattern will produce a more shapely bush.

Best Time for Planting

Roses are sold in containers or bare root, and generally become available at nurseries around January or early February. It is best to purchase and plant roses in late winter or early spring so they can get established before beginning to bloom.

Avoid purchasing bare root roses after February when they have already begun to sprout in the package. Container roses can be planted as late as May with acceptable results, but an earlier planting is much better. You also may plant roses in the fall if you find them available.

Roses planted during the intense heat of summer must deal with stressful weather conditions while trying to get established in the landscape. Generally speaking, refrain from planting roses in June, July, August and early September.

Choosing the Right Location

An important consideration in deciding the location of rose plantings in the landscape is the growing conditions they need. Do not plant roses in partly shady or shady areas. They must have at least six to eight hours of direct sun daily to perform up to your expectations. Any shade they receive should, ideally, come in the afternoon. Morning sun helps dry the foliage early in the day which can help reduce disease problems.

Roses also need excellent drainage, so avoid low areas that stay wet. (An exception is the swamp rose, *Rosa palustris scandens*, which thrives in wet soil.)

Locate rose plantings where they can also be viewed and enjoyed from indoors. Garden areas that can be readily seen through windows make great spots for roses. And don't forget to locate fragrant roses along walkways, around patios and by entrances so the sweet scents they produce can be more easily savored.

Preparing the Bed

Whether planting your roses in a bed devoted exclusively to them or including them in existing beds with other types of plants, prepare the area where they will be planted carefully.

- First remove unwanted vegetation (weeds, turf grass, etc.) from the area. You may use the herbicide glyphosate to kill unwanted plants if they are green and growing.
- Turn the soil at least 8 to 10 inches deep.
- Spread amendments over the turned soil. Add at least 4 inches of organic matter such as compost, sphagnum peat moss, rotted manure and/or composted finely ground pine bark. Next, sprinkle a general purpose fertilizer appropriate to your area over the bed according to label directions.
- Adjust the soil pH if necessary. The ideal pH for roses is 6-6.5. Sulfur may be applied to lower the pH of the soil if it is over 7. Lime is needed to raise the pH and provide calcium if the pH is lower than 5.5 and calcium levels are low. (To find what might need to be added to your soil, have it tested through your local parish LSU AgCenter Extension office.).
- Thoroughly blend the amendments into the existing soil (a garden tiller is great to use for this), and rake smooth.
- You also may choose to build a raised bed 10-12 inches deep and fill it with a purchased soil mix. This can work very well, especially if the native soil is unsuitable, drainage needs to be improved and you want to grow your roses together in a bed. Choose a high quality soil mix rich in composted organic matter.

Proper Planting

Take some time and care when planting rose bushes, and make sure you do it properly.

- For bare root roses, remove the roots from the wrapper and put the roots down in a bucket of water. Dig a hole in a well-prepared bed as deep and wide as the root system. Place a cone-shaped mound of soil in the hole, position the plant over the cone and spread the roots out over it. Hold the plant in place so the graft union (large knob on lower part of plant) is about 2 inches higher than the soil of the bed. Use your other hand to push and firm soil into the hole to cover the roots. Make sure the graft union is above soil level when you finish.
- For container roses, dig a hole in the bed about the same size as the root ball in the container. Slide the plant out of the container. Don't worry if the soil falls away from the root system. Sometimes roses have not been potted up long enough for their roots to fill the container and hold together the soil. If the soil falls away when you take the rose out of the container, just follow the procedure for bare root roses. Otherwise, put the rootball in the hole. Its top should be level with the soil of the bed. Make sure the graft union is above soil level. Fill in around the rootball and firm with your hand.
- Water plants thoroughly to finish settling the soil, and mulch.



Planting a container-grown rose: In a well-prepared bed, dig a hole only as deep and a little wider than the rootball.



It is very important not to plant the bush too deep. The top of the rootball should be level with or slightly above the soil of the bed. Sometimes it helps to lay a stick across the hole to check this.



After planting, apply 1 or 2 inches of mulch (such as chopped leaves used here) around the bush.

Watering Guidelines

Established roses are relatively drought tolerant, but there will be times when hot, dry weather lasts long enough that you need to irrigate. When the soil is dry enough to require irrigation, it is best to water your roses thoroughly and deeply once or twice a week than to water lightly frequently. Apply enough water to penetrate at least 4 to 6 inches into the soil.

It's a good idea to water your roses in a way that keeps the water off the foliage. This will help minimize fungal leaf diseases. Soaker hoses work well for this. Otherwise, water roses during the early morning or during the day when the sun will dry the foliage rapidly.

Fertilizer Recommendations

A general-purpose fertilizer appropriate for the soil in your area can be applied to roses in early March in South Louisiana and late March in North Louisiana. Follow label directions carefully. Fertilize again at the time interval indicated on the label. Slow-release fertilizers are recommended since they fertilize for an extended period, save effort and reduce fertilizer runoff.

Different fertilizers will provide nutrients for different lengths of time. When to apply fertilizer again depends on the fertilizer you are using and how long it lasts. Apply fertilizer at the intervals recommended on the package. Generally, do not fertilize roses after early September to avoid encouraging them to grow in winter.

If your soil is low in magnesium and calcium and the pH is below 5.5, adding dolomitic lime may be necessary. Foliar sprays of Epsom salts (magnesium sulfate) at 1 teaspoon/gallon of water will enhance the green color of the foliage without changing the pH if it is already high enough.

Pruning

When necessary, major pruning of everblooming roses is best done anytime from late January (South Louisiana) through mid-February (North Louisiana). Everblooming roses are those that bloom abundantly in spring and early summer, moderately through the summer and then produce an outstanding display in the fall. Once-blooming roses (those that bloom only once a year) should be pruned after the flowers fade in mid-summer.

Use sharp bypass hand pruners. They make clean cuts and minimize damage to the stems. Should you need to cut canes larger than one-half inch in diameter, use bypass loppers. It's a good idea to wear a sturdy pair of leather gloves and long sleeves to protect your hands and arms from the thorns.

Pruning Everblooming Hybrid Tea and Grandiflora Roses

Pruning in late January or early February is especially important for the popular hybrid tea and grandiflora roses. Without this annual



pruning, these roses generally become leggy, less vigorous, unattractive and do not bloom as well. But all types of roses generally require some pruning each year to control their shape or size.

- Remove all diseased or dead canes by cutting them back to their point of origin. Weak, spindly canes the diameter of a pencil or less, should also be removed the same way. A good rose bush should have four to eight strong, healthy canes the diameter of your finger or larger after this first step.
- Cut back the remaining canes to about 24 inches from ground level. When you prune back a cane, make the cut about one-quarter inch above a dormant bud or newly sprouted side shoot. Try to cut back to buds that face outward, away from the center of the bush. The new shoot produced by the bud will grow outward, opening up the bush for light, air and orderly growth. This may seem picky, but this really does make a difference.

Many new gardeners have a hard time getting up the nerve to cut their hybrid tea and grandiflora rose bushes back the recommended amount. And, if the winter has been mild, roses even may have flowers or buds on them when it comes time to prune, which gardeners are reluctant to prune off. If you don't, however, the result will be tall, rangy, overgrown bushes that will not be nearly as attractive.

Pruning Other Everblooming Roses

Generally, do a less severe pruning of other everblooming roses, such as China, tea, noisette, Bourbon, polyantha, floribunda, shrub, landscape and miniature roses in late January or early February. Roses in these categories usually have more pleasing shapes without severe pruning. Pruning, however, is still often necessary to control the size of the more vigorous cultivars, to create a more pleasing shape or to train them. It is far easier for you and healthier for the rose bush if you evaluate the need for pruning and prune, if necessary, at least once annually.

At least prune out any dead or diseased canes during the early spring pruning. To shape the bushes, you can use hand pruners to selectively cut back individual branches. Some gardeners even shear these tough roses with hedge shears to shape them and encourage full, bushy growth. But hand pruners are generally preferred.

Even if your bushes are just the right size, you should consider pruning them back some in early spring. Remember, they will be growing vigorously and increasing in size during spring and summer.

If some of your bushes are considerably overgrown, they will tolerate hard pruning in early spring to get them back into shape. As a rule of thumb, cut back these roses about one-quarter to one-half of their height, depending on how overgrown they are. Long, especially vigorous shoots that have grown well beyond the rest of the bush and make it look out of balance, may be cut back harder than the rest of the bush. Young bushes planted within the last year or two will likely not need drastic pruning, but may be cut back slightly to encourage a full, bushy plant.

Pruning in Late Summer

Louisiana has an exceptionally long rose-growing season from March to December and two outstanding blooming seasons – April to June and October to early December. Because of this, examine your everblooming rose bushes for

a second, but not as severe, pruning in late summer – around late August or early September. Pruning done in late summer shapes them up and prepares the bushes for outstanding fall bloom.

Cut back hybrid tea and grandiflora roses about 30-36 inches. Prune other types of everblooming roses as needed, but generally not as much as in late winter.

We also prune when removing faded flowers (deadheading). Cut the faded flower or flower cluster at least back to the first five leaflet leaf (leaves closest to the flowers generally have three leaflets). If the shoot that produced the flowers is especially strong and vigorous, cut it back farther when removing the faded flowers. With especially fast growing, vigorous rose bushes, cutting back somewhat farther than the first five leaflet leaf when deadheading will help control the plants between major prunings.

Pruning Once-blooming Roses

The time to prune once-blooming roses is very different from everblooming roses. Once-blooming roses produce their flowers in one big gush during late spring and early summer and do not bloom the rest of the year. They produce flowers only on growth made the previous summer. If once-blooming roses are pruned back hard in early spring, they will produce few, if any, flowers.

Many climbing and rambler roses, such as Cherokee, swamp, Lady Banks, Veilchenblau, Dorothy Perkins and Blaze roses, and some old garden bush types are once-blooming roses. If you are not sure what type of rose you have, think about how they bloom.

When major pruning of once-blooming bush roses is necessary, it is best done in mid-summer soon after they have finished flowering. Study the plant carefully and prune to achieve the desired effect, much as you would do everblooming bush roses.

Climbing and rambler roses should not be pruned back hard each year like bush roses. Pruning them is largely determined by how large and on what structure they are being trained. Pruning, when done, is more selective and less extensive.

Pest Control

Different rose groups and cultivars vary tremendously in their susceptibility to insect and disease problems. The best landscape roses are relatively carefree and rarely need attention to pest control. Other groups, many of the hybrid teas for example, require a regular spray program from spring to fall to prevent major damage from pests, notably black spot.

Pest control needs should certainly be factored in when making choices on what roses you intend to grow. If you want to minimize spraying, look in particular for resistance to black spot disease. Relatively carefree roses may not necessarily be immune to pest problems, but the symptoms are not as severe, and the plants recover without treatment (although their appearance may suffer for a time).

Diseases

Black spot, a fungal disease (*Diplocarpon*), is the most widely distributed and destructive disease of roses in Louisiana. It can be recognized by the nearly circular black spots with frayed or fringed margins. The spots vary in number and size and are usually present on the upper surface. Although the spots are unsightly, the more serious effect is from extensive leaf drop that reduces the vigor of a plant. (The leaves make food for the plant through photosynthesis. The loss of leaves means the plant is less able to make the food it needs, which lowers its vigor.)

To control black spot, a regular, preventative fungicide spray program must be followed throughout the growing season. This spray schedule needs to begin as soon as new leaves begin after pruning in late winter. You cannot spray on an as-needed basis when you see the symptoms, since that will not successfully control this disease. Fungicides containing azoxystrobin, benomyl, calcium polysulfide, captan, chlorothalonil, copper hydroxide, copper oleate, kresoxim-methyl, mancozeb, maneb, myclobutanil, potassium bicarbonate, propiconazole, sulfur, triforine, thiophanate methyl or thiophanate methyl plus mancozeb are recommended. Be sure to follow the label recommendations carefully.



Blackspot produces dark spots of various sizes on leaves and leads to yellowing and dropping foliage.

Powdery mildew fungus (*Sphaerotheca*) appears in the spring and fall when days are warm and humid and the weather is dry. Symptoms include a white, powdery coating of fungal growth on the young foliage and flower buds, which can result in deformed leaves and aborted flower buds. Leaves may curl slightly or appear blistered. In extreme cases, the new growth may be stunted and twisted. Powdery mildew is generally not as pervasive and damaging as black spot, and you may wait until you see early symptoms to spray. Recommended fungicides include azoxystrobin, calcium polysulfide, copper hydroxide, copper oleate, copper salts, kresoxim-methyl, myclobutanil, polysulfide, potassium bicarbonate, propiconazole, sulfur, thiophanate-methyl, thiophanate-methyl/mancozeb, triadimefon and triforine.

Leaf rust, caused by a fungus (*Phragmidium*), is also seen on roses in Louisiana. It produces roughly circular bright orange spots on the underside of the leaves and on stems. Treat with a product containing azoxystrobin, calcium polysulfide, kresoxim-methyl, mancozeb, maneb, myclobutanil, propiconazole, sulfur or triforine for best control.

Stem cankers and dieback usually appear as dead or discolored areas on rose canes and vary in color from light tan to dark, purplish brown. They are caused by various species of fungi, including *Botryosphaeria*, *Leptosphaeria*, *Coniothyrium* and *Cryptosporella*. These fungi enter healthy canes through wounds. Cankers can enlarge until they entirely surround the cane, and/or reach the base (crown) of the plant spreading to other canes or killing the plant. They may occur on roses that have been pruned improperly, weakened by black spot, poor nutrition or poor growing conditions. No fungicides specifically are available to control stem canker.

Avoid injury to the plant during transplanting, cultivating, pruning and flower-cutting. Wounds are a major way the fungus enters the plant.

Prune properly; prune an outward-facing bud. This will help to avoid too many branches growing into the center of the plant that may cross and rub together.

Remove and destroy all infected or dead portions of canes immediately. Make all pruning cuts well below the diseased areas, and prune about one-quarter inch above an outward-facing bud. Disinfect cutting tools after use on a diseased plant in a solution of 1 part household bleach to 9 parts water.

Crown gall is an infection caused by *Agrobacterium tumefaciens*, a bacterium that lives in the soil. Symptoms are knob-like swellings on stems, usually near the soil line or the graft union. Infected plants may become stunted. There are no treatments. Remove and dispose of infected plants.

Also see LSU AgCenter publication 2613, *Rose Diseases*, for more information.

Insects and Mites

Insects and mites attack both rose flowers and foliage.

Thrips are small insects that attack rose flowers. They enter and infest the buds while the buds are still closed. Infested buds may fail to open or open only partially. Flowers that do open will exhibit tan, burned edges to the petals, as if the flowers are old right after they open. If you look into the flower and separate the petals, you should see the small thrips moving around in the flower. Although they do not damage the bush itself, it is a shame to see flowers ruined. The spring/early summer blooming is when thrips generally attack. They are rarely seen in the fall blooming period. Systemic insecticides generally work best, such as acephate or imidacloprid. Contact sprays such as Malathion or Mavrik are also recommended.

Cucumber beetles also will feed on the flower occasionally and can be controlled with carbaryl or the insecticides mentioned above.

Aphids also are primarily a problem in spring on the flushes of new growth and flower buds that occur then. They feed by sucking out sap and can cause deformed leaves, shoots and aborted flower buds. They are an occasional problem but easily controlled with applications of a light paraffinic oil spray or general-purpose insecticides as needed.

Several species of spider mites attack roses, but the most common are the two-spotted and red spider mites. Damage is primarily to the foliage, which appears dull and stippled with tiny light dots. Use a magnifying glass to see the mites on the underside of the leaves. In heavy infestations webbing may be produced. Control with two or more applications of light paraffinic oil, insecticidal soap, Malathion or bifenthrin.



Thrips infest spring and early summer rose flowers causing the buds to open poorly and damaging the petals.



The LSU AgCenter Burden Center is a member of All-America Rose Selection's (AARS) nationwide network of approved Public Gardens. AARS Public Gardens contain a minimum of 800 rose bushes and offer special displays of outstanding new varieties chosen by AARS for their beauty, novelty and vigor. The Burden rose garden maintains an inventory of 1,500 plants representing 150 varieties, including AARS winners as far back as 1946. Starting each June, the gardens offer an exclusive preview of the coming year's outstanding new varieties. *(Photo by: John Wozniak, Professor, LSU AgCenter Communications)*

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