

**“It is the month of June,  
The month of leaves and roses,  
When pleasant sights salute the  
eyes, And pleasant scents the  
noses.” Nathaniel Parker Willis**

Roses have been cherished for centuries and remain a great favourite to this day. Nothing can surpass the sight and scent of a rose bush in full bloom. And even if your garden is the size of a handkerchief you can still enjoy this beautiful flower in all its glory.

**Miniature Roses** are tiny, just as the name describes. Depending on the variety, they grow from 10cm up to around 35cm high, so are the ideal rose for the front of a border or to scatter amongst low-growing plants. They also do well in containers but will require extra watering as their root system is delicate. **Patio Roses** are slightly larger, reaching between 45cm and 60cm high.

**Hybrid Tea.** These are undoubtedly the most popular species due to the shape of the large, elegant flowers. If you choose a Hybrid Tea, you are spoilt for choice with the vast range of sizes, shades and fragrances available. Each graceful bloom is held on a single stem making this the ideal plant to use for cut flowers. These are the best choice for the budding rose-grower and for small gardens as they are the easiest to grow and produce lots of flowers in a compact space.

**Floribunda Rose** bushes are similar in size to Hybrid Teas. they produce more plentiful, slightly smaller flowers which develop in clusters. Each bloom opens at a different time giving a wonderful show all through the flowering season. Floribundas are extremely hardy and disease resistant.

**Rambling Roses and Climbing Roses** are very similar but grow and flower in a different way. Climbers grow vertically so are suitable if you want to grow roses up trees, walls and trellises. A climbing rose flowers repeatedly in flushes throughout the season. The rambler, however, flowers just once, albeit in one spectacular display. After flowering it develops dramatic hips to give a great autumn display.

So, once you've decided which variety to buy, where and when to plant it? Most mail-order nurseries sell their roses 'bare-rooted', i.e. without pots. You should only plant these in mid-April or mid-September. However, if you buy a container-grown rose it can be planted at any time. All roses prefer a position in full sun but as long as the bush gets at least half a day's sun it should flourish.

Soil quality is important but not vital. Roses are tolerant plants so should survive in most soils, but the ideal is rich, well-worked earth with free drainage. Prepare the bed in advance by digging over and incorporate lots of



organic matter such as well-rotted manure or compost and a sprinkling of rose fertiliser. Don't plant new roses where other roses have been grown within the last three years.

Most roses are created, and then grafted onto a strong root stock. This join is called the 'union' and your plant should be buried with the union 8cm below the surface of the soil.

Many people are discouraged from growing roses by the pruning, but it's actually very simple. Basically, roses produce flowers on the new shoots that grow in early spring and summer. If left unpruned, a rose bush turns into a muddle of branches and won't produce good quality flowers. The purpose of pruning is to remove old wood to encourage more flower-producing new stems; for every old branch cut away, at least two new ones will grow leading to more blooms.

Rose bushes should be pruned twice. The first cut is done in late autumn. Cut all the stems back so the bush is about half size. The main pruning comes in early spring, just before growth starts. As a general rule, hard prune all the branches on the bush to about 20cm from the base, preferably just above a dormant bud. Several new shoots will develop below the pruning cut. Purists will be shocked, but this works very well indeed!

Dead-heading is easy. Simply snip off the dead flowers when they appear to encourage new ones to grow. Just don't dead-head if you want rosehips in the autumn. As for feeding, buy a rose fertiliser and follow the instructions on the packaging, usually just three feeds during the season. Start feeding just as the leaves are beginning to form in the early spring and stop feeding after July.

Roses can be affected by a number of problems, caused by both insects and disease. If your bushes are affected by any problems, there are proprietary solutions available. Many of the modern rose varieties have an inbuilt resistance to the most common diseases.

Having a flowering season stretching from June to September, you are assured beauty, colour and perfume for at least a quarter of the year and possibly a new hobby, as rose growing can become rather addictive!

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