

# Split Mountain Garden Center

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## Growing Roses

Do you want to grow roses but fear that they are too difficult? Have you been frustrated in earlier attempts to grow these beauties? Relax! There are hundreds of rose varieties that will grow well in our mountain region with very little care. The trick is knowing which varieties to plant and to learn a little about their care.

### Rose Types

**Species Roses:** the original roses found in nature. They normally have 5 petals and are quite hardy.

**Old Garden Roses:** "Old-Fashioned" roses grown prior to 1867 when the first Hybrid Tea roses were introduced. They are mostly of European origin and include the Albas, Gallicas, Moss Roses, Centifolias, Bourbons and Hybrid Perpetuals. They are generally fragrant and very hardy.

**Modern Roses:** developed when roses from the China and Japan were introduced into the blood lines. They include Miniatures, Floribundas and Hybrid Teas. They have more continuous bloom, but are less hardy.

**Modern Shrub Roses:** developed by rose breeders seeking to obtain excellent qualities from varied types of roses. English Roses bred by David Austin and Canadian Roses from Agriculture Canada are examples. Canadian Roses are among the hardiest, able to withstand sub-zero temperatures with ease.

### Planting and Growing Information

**Select Hardy Varieties.** Many roses can be grown easily in gardens in the Rocky Mountain region of the country. Look for the USDA hardiness zone rating to determine if they will suffer winter damage. We are considered Zone 5, so any rose rated Zone 5 or lower will survive our winters (given adequate moisture) with minimal cane die back. Roses grown on their own roots rather than grafted on to a rootstock generally perform better in cold climates. If the canes die back, the same variety will come up from the roots instead of an unknown rootstock.

**Planting.** The planting site for your roses should receive at least 6 hours of full sun daily. As roses are long-term investments, soil preparation is very important. They prefer rich, well-drained soil. It is best to add 1 part compost to 2 parts of your garden soil. If using manure, go lightly as it can be high in salts which damage plants and increase alkalinity. Roses prefer a soil pH of 6 to 6.5, and our soils are typically as high as pH 8. Prepare an area at least 24" wide and 18" deep. Gently loosen the roots before planting if they are tight in the pot. If roses are grafted varieties, plant them so that the bud union is 2 inches below the soil surface. If they are grown on their own roots, plant them 1 to 2 inches deeper than they were in the pot.

**Watering and Fertilizing.** After planting, water the roses in well. Slow, deep watering is best, repeated every three days at first, then less frequently as they become established. An inch of water per week is ideal, whether from rain or irrigation. Fertilize with a mild, water-soluble fertilizer after planting, then once a month thereafter. A slow release fertilizer may be applied at the beginning of the growing season if you prefer. Stop fertilizing in early-August as the roses need to harden off for the winter. Regularly add mulch and organic materials such as alfalfa meal to help preserve moisture, prevent weeds and ensure healthy plants.

**Winter Protection.** Most young roses need some winter protection until they become established. After the leaves begin to drop (usually after 2 or 3 freezes), pile compost or mulch 8-12" high around the base of the bush. For tender roses, or in the most severe climates, you may want to wrap the plant with burlap for added protection against drying winds. If the winter is dry, water the roses about once a month.

**Pruning Roses.** For the first 3 years, prune only the dead wood from the plant. If the rose blooms only once in the spring, wait until after it is finished blooming to prune. If the rose blooms repeatedly throughout the season, prune when the leaves begin to emerge in the spring. To encourage open growth in your rose, make all cuts about a quarter inch above a leaf bud that points out from the center of the bush. As your rose matures, thin out a third of the oldest canes at ground level. Also remove any branches that cross or grow inward. To encourage new blooms during the season, "deadhead", or remove spent blooms from the bush by cutting just above the first outward-facing leaf with 5 leaflets. Large shrub roses may be pruned to shape with hedge trimmers.

**Pest and Problems.** Watch for common pests such as aphids and spider mites. Frequently spraying the undersides of the leaves with water will help prevent them from gaining a foothold. Powdery mildew is a common fungus that can coat the leaves of susceptible varieties. A preventive spray is 1 tablespoon baking soda and 2 tablespoons light horticultural oil per gallon of water on a weekly basis. Sprays will damage the leaves of 'Rugosa' type roses, but they are generally pest free and do not demand much care.

**More Information.** The mail-order branch of Split Mountain Farm is High Country Roses. We ship roses throughout the United States, including Alaska and Hawaii. For more information about the 250 varieties of roses we sell on-line, visit our website: [www.highcountryroses.com](http://www.highcountryroses.com).

We hope you will try some of our hardy rose varieties and discover that they can be easy to grow and provide a colorful addition to your garden.