



Contribution Information Sheet

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Abstract: This is a great article for the newer rosarian on how to think about garden layout. It covers selecting the best spots on your property and the things to avoid. It covers the advantages of raised beds and planting in the ground. The best soil conditioners and planting mixes to use plus the best fertilization techniques to get started are covered. Sizing your beds for maintenance convenience is covered along with some ideas on irrigation systems. The article is 2 pages long but in Cindy's style very on target. A must read for the newer rosarian.

Planning Your New Rose Beds

Cindy Dale, C.R.

As spring approaches our thoughts may be turning toward building new rose beds. I know there never seems to be enough space for all the new rose varieties I want to add. Or maybe we'll be buying a new house and starting our landscape planning from scratch. In any case, let's review some basic ideas on rose bed planning.

1. Pick areas in your yard that get a minimum of 6-8 hours of full sun per day, the more the better. Some roses may be advertised as shade tolerant but they really aren't. If you plant roses in filtered/partial sunlight areas they may grow but they will be thin, scraggly, and never reach their full potential.

2. Choose locations that are as far away from trees and other large landscape bushes as possible – a minimum of 10 yards. The tree roots will compete for the water and fertilizer that is meant for the roses and they will always win, leaving the roses in weaker condition.

3. Raised beds are preferable but planting into well-amended holes in the ground works too. Raised beds have the advantage of draining away excess water since roses do not like to have their roots sitting in water. Also, since raised beds are elevated they require less bending down and are easier on your back. I also like the fact that rose roots can reach out in any direction in an amended bed and find the "good stuff" to provide the nutrition they need.

Raised bed construction begins by killing the grass from the desired area or removing it. If you use glyphosphate (Round Up) to kill the grass be sure to follow the manufacturer recommendations for the amount of time to wait before attempting to plant roses in the area. Using landscape blocks or timbers stacked about 2-3 feet high, remove the top 1-2 feet of clay soil and backfill with a commercially prepared, amended soil mix which has a pH of approximately 6.5 from landscape suppliers. To that, I would also add a pre-emergent weed preventer such as Preen and as many of the following organics as possible: Epsom Salts (magnesium), Gypsum (calcium), cow manure & mushroom compost (if not already in the mix) and Mills Magic Rose Mix or blood meal, bone meal, fish meal, alfalfa, and cottonseed. Do NOT add synthetic fertilizer of any type such as Osmocote, Miracle Gro, etc. Newly planted bushes should not be fertilized until they are well established and after their first bloom cycle – usually 8 weeks.

Work all of these in well with a tiller. This is a lot of work and I recommend having the beds professionally done if your budget allows it.

If you want to plant in individual holes in the ground that's fine too. Holes should be dug approximately 2 feet wide by 2 feet deep. In a wheelbarrow, mix 1/3 soil from the hole, 1/3 cow manure (I prefer Black Kow), 1/3 soil conditioner

such as Nature's Helper that breaks up the clay, plus the organics mentioned above. Mix well, discarding rocks and sticks, and crumbling the clods of clay to make a soft, friable mixture. Add a handful of Super Phosphate to the bottom of the hole and plant your bush as usual.

4. Don't make your beds too wide – only 2-3 roses deep in each row so that each bush can be reached and taken care of without walking in the beds which compacts the soil. For this reason, many rose growers construct long, rectangular beds. It's also preferable to be able to reach the beds from all 4 sides.

5. Consider how tall and how wide your roses will grow and plant accordingly. For instance, hybrid teas can grow to 6-7 feet so they might be too tall in front of a window. In that instance, you might want to consider Floribundas which only get to about 4-5 feet or miniatures/mini-floras which average 2-4 feet. Climbers will reach 8-20+ feet high and will need support to grow on such as a trellis or arbor to tie their long, flexible canes to.

Hybrid teas, grandifloras, and floribundas tend to grow straight up and down with an average 2-3 foot spread so you'll want to plant them about 3 feet apart in beds whereas shrub roses tend to sprawl and spread with a more relaxed, informal look. These do better when planted 4-5 feet apart on the perimeter of the garden or somewhere where they'll have room to spread out. Mini roses can be planted 2-3 feet apart. Floribundas give you a lot of bang for your buck in terms of a color splash with lots of blooms, especially when planted in masses of 3-4 bushes of the same type.

6. Choose the type of bushes you have the time and inclination to maintain. Hybrid teas, grandifloras, and floribundas generally require the most care but some varieties are more disease resistant or hardier than others. ARS Consulting Rosarians can help guide you to these and assist in picking the right bush for your situation. Earthkind roses are an excellent choice for the casual gardener. They have been studied and found to do well without spraying, deadheading or fertilizing. Go to www.ars.org or look up Earthkind Roses on the web to read all about them. Even though roses require some work I have always felt that it is well worth it and that they pay you back many times over with their gorgeous blooms!

7. If you're planning a large garden, you'll want to consider installing an automatic watering system such as Dripworks, Damm or others such as soaker hoses which are connected to timers. This saves a lot of time and trouble dragging hoses around.

8. Finally, be sure to have plenty of mulch on hand. After planting your new bushes, mulch generously around each one to hold in moisture, to keep the soil cool in summer, and dress up the look of your beautiful new rose bed.