

A Rose Is a Rose Is a Rose . . .

Growing Miniature Roses



You've fallen in love with a miniature rose and want to grow one. Wonderful! A few facts are . . .

- ▶ To grow minis successfully, there are two commandments to keep in mind:
 - Miniature roses are **real** roses.
 - Miniature roses are **not** houseplants.
- ▶ The term **miniature** defines the size of the rose's blooms (usually not over 2 inches) and its leaves (smaller than might be expected in proportion to its height).
- ▶ The average miniature rose ranges from 12 to 36 inches tall with the exception of climbing minis, which can reach a height of 10 feet.
- ▶ The height of micro-minis ranges from 6 to 8 inches.

Selection and Care of Miniature Roses

Selection

Select top quality plants for growing healthy roses.

- The most reliable source for any special plant is the grower or hybridizer who has devoted time, study and money to its development and perfection. Seek out a local nursery that specializes in roses or one of the many good online nurseries whose owners are also the hybridizers.
- The annual rose-buying guide from the American Rose Society, *Handbook for Selecting Roses* (\$3.50), rates more than 3,000 varieties and is a valuable guide for the rose buyer.
- Do not be misled by the proliferation of minis at the grocery store. These roses are potted plants intended to charm the recipient or complement the decor for six weeks or so before they are thrown out with the trash.

Soil

Slightly acidic (pH of 6.5 to 7.5), loose textured soil makes minerals and water available so the roots can expand and absorb nutrients. Soils in Kansas and Missouri tend to be alkaline clay, which must be amended to increase acidity and assure good drainage.

- Until the true pH is determined, flee from anyone who suggests "throwing some lime into the rose bed" is the proper way to amend the soil. The most accessible and accurate soil testing source is your local extension office. The Extension horticulturist will report not only the pH level, but also information on chemical or organic amendments to make the soil welcoming to roses.
- If possible, it is better to prepare any new rose bed several weeks or months before the roses are to be planted.

Planting

American minis customarily grow on their own roots thus ensuring that whatever comes up is the rose you chose. Roses from local nurseries will usually arrive in half-gallon pots. Mail order roses are shipped in 6-inch or smaller pots. To plant either one:

1. Space minis of average size 12 to 14 inches from center to center. Spacing for larger minis is determined by their spread at maturity.
2. Dig a hole deeper and wider than the pot to create a large area for the roots to grow.
3. If a soil test indicates a need for additional phosphorous, then mix several tablespoons of superphosphate or bone meal into the soil at the bottom of the planting hole.
4. To judge the amount of soil to be returned to the hole, set the potted mini in the hole so that after it is planted, it will be at the same level as in its pot. Refill the hole so the rose will be situated at or slightly below the level of the ground.
5. Remove the rose from its pot. For the mail order rose, spread the roots downward and out to the sides of the hole. For the larger nursery plant, tease the visible roots free of the root ball.
6. If the soil had not been enriched earlier, add composted manure and peat moss to equal the amount of fill dirt remaining. Refill the hole so the soil will be level although the rose will be situated at or slightly below ground level.
7. Gently water the newly planted rose to settle the soil around the roots.
8. To keep the newly planted rose from drying out until it recovers from planting shock, build up more soil in a cone around it. Keep the soil moist.

Watering

As it is for all living things, water is the lifeline for miniature roses. Minis have shallow roots so the soil around them should never be allowed to dry out.

- When they arrive from the local nursery or by mail, water them immediately. Water them every sunny day after they are planted if Mother Nature hasn't cooperated.
- The usual recommendation is to give roses one inch of water per week. During our blistering summers, this amount must be increased.
- All roses should be watered in the morning to allow the plants to dry before evening. Otherwise, an army of fungal diseases will invade the garden.

Fertilizing

Fertilizers, the extra food the rose needs to grow strong, may be organic (manure, peat moss, blood meal or alfalfa pellets) or inorganic (chemicals such as ammonium phosphate, ammonium nitrate or magnesium sulfate that come in granular or soluble form).

- Organic fertilizers decompose more slowly and improve the quality of the soil.
- Inorganic or chemical fertilizers act faster and show results more rapidly because their nutrients are immediately available to the root system.

- Either type correctly applied will give good results. Fertilizers nourish the rose, but are by no means a cure-all. Too much fertilizer can burn roots and kill the rose, or produce a rose that is all foliage and no blooms. Rose growers mistakenly use fertilizer as a pick-me-up for an ailing plant when they should be applying insecticides or fungicides or, better yet, doing nothing at all.
- There is an old saying: *Water is the best fertilizer*. It is the only fertilizer that should be applied to an ailing plant.

Providing protection

Roses need protection from disease, predators (both insect and animal) and the weather. In theory, miniatures can get any disease that affects their larger relatives.

A word about the chemical products mentioned in this handout. Please consult your extension office about the currently most appropriate chemicals. Those approved by the government may, at any given time, have their approval removed.

Diseases of Miniature Roses

Powdery mildew

This is a fungal disease that makes the rose plant look as if it was dusted with confectioners' sugar. The leaves become distorted, turn yellow and fall. The disease can occur any time of year, but it is most common when the days are warm and the nights cool.

Control: Spray the entire plant with a fungicide such as Daconil (chlorothalonil) or Funginex (triforine) every 7 to 10 days.

Black spot

This is a fungal disease that causes black spots to appear on the leaves. The leaves then turn yellow and fall. Since black spot cannot be killed, special efforts must be made to prevent it.

Because the spores that cause black spot live in the ground and are spread by splashing up on plants, and because the leaves of minis are close to the ground, they are very prone to contracting this disease.

Control: Even before any symptoms are visible, begin a regular program of spraying a fungicide such as Daconil, Funginex or Immunox every 7 to 10 days. Pick diseased leaves off the plant and clean up any that are on the ground and destroy them. The disease will winter over so do not compost affected leaves since the compost pile may not reach high enough temperatures to kill the spores.

Insect and Animal Predators

Aphids

These are small, green or white, soft-bodied insects that exist in large colonies. They arrive to suck the sap from the rose stems, buds and leaves, thus weakening the plant.

Control: Organic controls include washing the aphids off with a strong jet of water or using insecticidal soap. Several chemical controls are available. Check the labels. They are also the natural prey of ladybugs.

Caterpillars, worms and rose slugs

These will skeletonize rose leaves by eating around the veins.

Control: Spray regularly with any common insecticide labeled for use on these pests.

Spider mites

As an entomologist will tell you, spider mites are not insects and therefore do not belong in this section. For the sake of convenience, however, they will be discussed with the other bugs. Spider mites, like aphids, live in colonies and suck the sap from roses. They are a real scourge to miniature roses.

Control: If spider mites are present, the gardener will detect salt and pepper spots on the underside of rose leaves or a mottling of the foliage. The mites can be controlled with chemicals containing malathion or bifenthrin.

They also can be washed from the underside of the leaves with a strong jet of water. Mites cannot fly so they will die if knocked to the ground.

Insecticidal soaps may give some control. If the infestation continues without intervention, the mites spin webs around the canes and blooms, which make eradication very difficult. For that reason, a preventive spray program based on their 28-day breeding cycle is the most effective treatment.

Weather

In the Midwest, plants can survive even the hottest summer if they have sufficient water. All roses tend to miniaturize in torrid weather. Blooms will be reduced and the plants can become more vulnerable to disease, but with increased water they will survive.

Temperatures in the 90's will mean that spraying for disease or insects must be delayed until the weather moderates or be done in the early morning hours. The incidence of fungal diseases will decrease, but spider mites may thrive. If this happens, then the plants should be thoroughly soaked the preceding day. Then, by the dawn's early light, use the chemicals. At this time, water is again the best fertilizer.

Control: Erratic shifts in temperature, not the cold, are the Grim Reapers of roses in this area. Roses are mulched to keep their roots cold after they are dormant. Mulch keeps the soil temperature constant so that 70-degree days in February will not stimulate new growth destined to freeze in March.

After the killing frosts around Thanksgiving, if possible, strip the leaves from the minis and, with extra compost or soil brought in for this purpose, make cones of soil 8- to 10-inches high around the plants.

If desired, the soil can be covered with leaves or existing mulch, but do not depend on mulch alone. Uncovered roses in seesaw temperatures will heave out of the ground when it's warm, thus exposing their roots to freezing when cold temperatures return.

References for Rose Maintenance

Books

For more complete information on rose topics, gardeners should invest in a good, general rose reference book. Recommended books are:

- *Ortho's All About Roses*
- *Ortho's Enjoying Roses*
- *Handbook for Selecting Roses* from the American Rose Society (see below)

American Rose Society

For additional information on growing miniature roses, contact the American Rose Society, P.O. Box 30,000, Shreveport, LA 71130-0030. Their phone number is (800) 637-6534. Their Website is www.ars.org.

Miniature Rose Nurseries with Free Catalogs

Many nurseries also have toll-free numbers and Web sites displaying their catalogs of rose offerings.

Bridges Roses

2734 Toney Road
Lawndale, NC 28090
(704) 538-9412
www.bridgesroses.com

Sequoia Nursery

2519 E. Noble Avenue
Visalia, CA 93292
(559) 732-0309
www.sequoianursery.biz

John's Miniature Roses

24062 NE Riverside
St. Paul, OR 97137
(800) 820-0465
www.johnsminiatureroses.com

Tiny Petals Mini Rose Nursery

2880 Ramsey Cutoff
Silver Springs, NV 89429
(775) 577-4474
www.tinypetalsnursery.com

Nor'East Miniature Roses, Inc.

P.O. Box A
Rowley, MA 01969
(800) 426-6485
www.noreast-miniroses.com

One who shops for plants by mail may, understandably, wonder how reliable the suppliers are. The real proof is the satisfaction the customer has with the service received.

Nothing is perfect, but there is a Web site called www.gardenweb.com that collects comments from customers reporting on their experiences with over 3,000 mail order plant suppliers. The organization is a merged effort of two customer-rating organizations. Try it. It's free.

Hall of Fame Miniature Roses in Commerce for over 20 Years

ARS Rating	Rose	Color	Petals	Height
9.2	Jeanne Lajoie (Climber)	Medium pink	40	6-7 feet
8.7	Snow Bride	White	20	12-24 inches
8.6	Magic Carousel	Red blend	25+	16-24+ inches
8.5	Rise 'n' Shine	Medium yellow	35	12-24 inches
8.4	Starina	Orange red	25+	12-16 inches
8.3	Party Girl	Yellow blend	23	12-24 inches
8.1	Cinderella	White	55	Under 12 inches
8.0	Beauty Secret	Medium red	25+	12-24 inches
8.0	Cupcake	Medium pink	60	12-24 inches

American Rose Society
(ARS) Rating System

9.3 - 10.0

One of the best roses ever

8.8 - 9.2

An outstanding rose

8.3 - 8.7

A very good to excellent
rose

7.8 - 8.2

A solid to very good rose

7.3 - 7.7

A little to somewhat above
average

6.8 - 7.2

An average rose

6.1 - 6.7

A below average rose

0.0 - 6.0

Not recommended

"Kansas State University Agricultural Experiment Station and Cooperative Extension Service."

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