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Climbing roses are shrubs that produce long canes (stems). They do not climb the way most vines do, which is by twining or grasping with tendrils or holdfasts. When properly pruned, trained, and tied to a support such as a fence, trellis, or arbor, they reach for the sky and can grow as tall as 8 to 15 feet.

If you're pressed for space, try one of the many climbing miniature roses. These only grow 6 to 12 feet tall and are perfect for a small arbor, trellis, or fence.

## Recommended Varieties

The following roses grown as climbers do well in Kansas City and are given a high rating by the American Rose Society:

Abraham Darby, Aloha, Altissimo, America, American Pillar, Angel Pink, Belinda, Cl. Cal Poly, City of York, Clair Matin, Compassion, Constance Spry, Don Juan, Dortmund, Dublin Bay, Fourth of July, Galway Bay, Henry Kelsey, Hi Ho, Hurdy Gurdy, Cl. Iceberg, Jeanne LaJoie, John Cabot, John Davis, New Dawn, Night Owl, Parade, Pierre de Ronsard, Cl. Rainbow's End, Rhonda, Cl. Rise 'n' Shine, Rosarium Uetersen, Silver Moon, Soaring Spirits, Westerland, William Baffin, and Zephrine Drouhin.

Note: Cl. indicates the climbing form of a shrub rose.

## Planting

Just like their smaller cousins, climbing roses are best planted in early spring. As with other roses, climbers should be placed in a location where they will receive at least six hours of sun each day and have room to spread over a sturdy support. It's always best to improve the soil by adding 6 to 8 inches of compost into entire bed and adjust the soil pH toward the ideal of 6.0 to 6.5. If you're unsure, you can get a free soil test from the Johnson County Extension <https://www.johnson.k-state.edu/programs/lawn-garden/soil-testing-and-composting/soil-testing/free-test/>

If possible, install the support structure before planting your climbing rose. The structure should provide horizontal as well vertical support. Climbing roses produce long canes, referred to as main canes, that need to be trained to a horizontal position. This encourages the plant to produce side shoots, or laterals, from the main canes. This is important as blooms are produced on laterals.

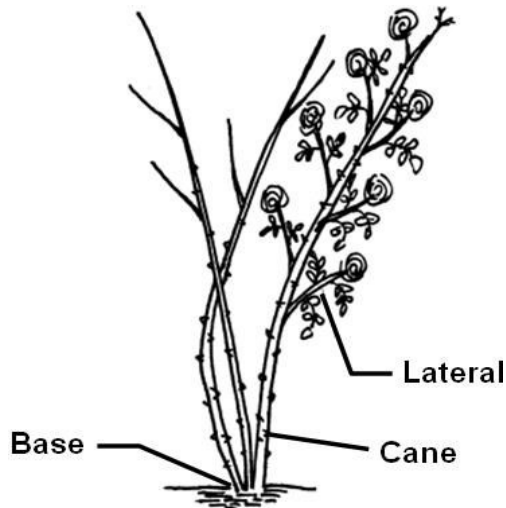
## Training

The first year, let the climber grow upward and make no attempt at training. As the canes grow, tie them loosely to the support with strips of stretchy material at 15-inch intervals. Allow at least 4 to 6 inches of "give" to the ties so air can circulate behind the canes.

The second year, start training the main canes to a horizontal position to encourage production of laterals off the main canes. Select the sturdiest canes and tie them loosely as before. Space the canes evenly and as close to horizontal as possible.

## Care

Climbing roses require the same basic care as other rose varieties: regular fertilization and watering, good air circulation, and protection from a wide variety of pests and diseases. The main difference between the care of climbers and other roses is in pruning and protecting them over the winter.



## Pruning

When it comes to pruning, think of climbers in two groups: once-bloomers and repeat-bloomers. To prune a rose correctly, you first need to know which group your rose is in.

Once-bloomers produce a single flush of flowers in early summer on canes that are at least one year old. Prune these climbers after they flower.

1. Remove the oldest canes, keeping 4 to 6 of the most vigorous, younger canes.
2. Along the canes you will find laterals which will produce flowers. Cut each lateral back to 4 or 5 sets of leaves. This tidies the plant and encourages another set of flowers the next year.

Repeat-bloomers produce flowers throughout the season, also on canes that are at least one year old. Prune these climbers in early spring, around mid-April.

1. Remove the oldest canes and the weakest new canes, retaining 4 to 6 of the most vigorous, younger canes, tying them to supports.
2. Cut back flowering laterals to 4 leaf buds per shoot.

In addition to the guidelines above, be sure to perform general maintenance pruning each year for both types of bloomers. This includes removing:

- Dead, damaged, or diseased canes
- Canes that cross
- Canes that grow in toward the center of the shrub
- Suckers that grow from below the graft union on grafted plants

## Winter Protection

There are two strategies for getting your climbers through the winter.

1. Buy hardy varieties, recommended for USDA zone 6a.
2. Tender roses will need winter protection. Remove the canes from their supports, lay them on the ground, peg them in place with stakes, and cover them with 12 inches of soil or leaves. Climbers can be left on their support and wrapped in burlap stuffed with straw.

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