

# We promise you roses in your garden



By GRETCHEN HEZER  
American-Southeast Staff

A dozen roses planted on Valentine's Day will dazzle your sweetheart with beauty and fragrance. For about a week, a dazzling rosethatch or two in the garden, however, will enchant your love for years. The rose's finicky reputation has intimidated many gardeners. And while Austin's inhospitable climate adds to the conservation of local growers, our warm weather also means roses can bloom eight months a year.

Austin's rosearians say you needn't fear growing the national flower. A tweak here and a tweak there, and a crop of roses is just a few steps away.

## Selection

Roses come in dozens of types and classifications, but beginners can think about two major groups: antique—or old roses, and modern roses, the most popular of which, by far, are the hybrid teas.

In general, anything that came before the 1860s produces clusters of floppy blooms on a shorter stem. Hybrid teas are the floribunda types—a single large bud on a long stem suitable for cutting.

Antiques are generally easier to grow, while moderns are more fussy. Dickie Patterson, rose buyer for It's a Jungle, says, "The old roses are more fun because they have good stories about them."

You can buy roses either potted in dirt like any other nursery plant, or bare root, which is a dirt-free, bushy-looking tree's dormant collection of sticks sold in plastic.

When buying a modern rose, look for one with three to five radially placed canes (the sticks above the roots that will eventually have leaves and flowers on them). Incidentally, many of the bare-root roses you can

buy at Home Depot and the like were grown in Tyler, where optimal dirt has attracted many commercial growers, says Austin Rose Society President Don Friesman.

## Planting

Valentine's Day and rose-planting season fall—coincidentally—at about the same time. Austin's temperate winter makes late February the ideal time to prepare your rose beds and get the growing started.

The first of Austin's little rose hostilities is the soil. It's too rocky, and it's too alkaline. Roses prefer a little more acid, thank you.

American Rose Society consulting rosarian Nancy Bernhardt says an amount of 100-year-old soil fix our dirt, so you need to use special rose dirt, available at area dirt purveyors such as Natural Gardener or Geo Growers. Good rose soil is "fluffy" (a result of turkey manure, says Bernhardt) and allows the roots to breathe, says Geo Growers' Austin Rose Society member Ronald Clani says to plant your roses in a raised bed filled with rose soil. Digging a hole in the front yard and throwing in a couple buckets of good dirt won't do. You'll need to take out about a third of the clay dirt under where you'll put the raised bed and replace it with organic material. Then, make a raised bed filled with good, well-drained dirt.

Or, just use a container. Many accomplished rosarians grow roses in pots, says Bernhardt: You'll need a 10- to 15-gallon container for your average hybrid tea rose. Having said that, many antique roses will tolerate our yucky soil; they can be plopped right into the ground, alkaloids and all.

When planting a new rose, bury it to about 1 inch below the bottom (the knobby part where the canes branch out from).

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Where to plant your roses? Keep in mind they need at least six hours of sunlight. Morning sun is best, and filtered afternoon light is OK.

## Care

Once your roses are planted, you'll need to water them. Quite a bit. Pray Austin doesn't endure another drought any time soon.

"Roses require water every day, or every other day at a minimum, when it's really hot, in the middle of summer," says Bernhardt. "Enough water to keep the soil evenly moist, but not soggy."

Protect your roses against blackspot, a fungus that causes the leaves to turn yellow and fall off. Spray them once a week with a commercial product such as Funginex, suggests Clani. But use one of three different products in rotation, so the fungus doesn't build up an immunity to one particular chemical. Or use baking soda. Spraying in the spring and fall should be adequate, says Bernhardt, as the heat will prevent fungal growth during the summer. Sometimes loosening the soil around the roses to allow more air circulation to the roots will end black spot, according to Clani.

Aplichs can simply be washed off with a garden hose (or use an organic insecticidal soap). For thrips, a sticky yet voracious pest that will suck the beauty from your blooms, you'll have to use a chemical such as Deltamethrin, says Bernhardt. Worms can be killed organically with *Bacillus thuringiensis*—commonly known as BT—available at garden stores.

Patterson, who's been growing roses since he was 10, urges caution when spraying. He says the most common mistake he sees is overwatering with improperly mixed chemicals.

And for spider mites, who munch down with their whiplike mouthparts, Patterson says he's had the best luck with seaweed spray. "I worked better than any chemicals I tried," he says.

Roses like to eat, so feed them a liquid fertilizer every two to three weeks. "It's important to use a fertilizer or supplement with iron," says consulting rosarian Betty Garnett.

Pruning—now's the time, by the way—is a topic that puts fear in the hearts of rose-growers.

wannabes. And for good reason. It's complicated. Best advice: Don't prune now, and add a pruning seminar (offered by the Austin Rose Society and by many local nurseries) to your to-do list with moderns. Pruning impacts the number and size of blooms you get, says Bernhardt, and gets rid of deadwood to allow for healthy new growth.

While xeriscapists might like you believe rose growing is potentially low-water, 100 years of raising these beauty queens can't have you

wrong: With a little work and a little luck, you'll have a lovely backdrop to your salvas and lanterns.

You may contact Gretchen Hezer at ghezer@earthlink.net or 512-356-3566.

## Roses that do well in Austin

Old roses	Playful
Maggie	Red Santa
Souvenir de la Malmaison	Cryer Imperial
Rose de Resais	Douce Debut
Old Blush	St. Patrick
Marabou	Touch of Cash
Modern roses	Climbers
Telegiana	Golden Showers
Ingrid Bergman	Royal Gold
Gold Meade	Don Juan
Playboy	Blast

Source: Betty Garnett and Dickie Patterson

## Where to buy roses

<b>The Natural Gardener</b> 6646 Old Bee Cave Road 288-6113	<b>Marbridge Farms</b> FM 1508 Manchaca 282-5004
<b>It's a Jungle</b> 907 Kramer Lane 637-2205	<b>Mail order:</b> <b>The Antique Rose Emporium</b> 800-441-0002 www.antiquerose.com/rtm.com

## Gardens

11811 W. 35th St.  
451-5490

Barton Springs Nursery  
3661 Bee Cave Road  
355-8588

## Austin Rose Society

The Austin Rose Society Inc. is an educational, nonprofit organization dedicated to the cultivation of roses in Central Texas. It is a local chapter of the American Rose Society. The group has monthly meetings and welcomes new members. Check out its Web site at [www.austinrose.com/community/groups/](http://www.austinrose.com/community/groups/).

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Give a  
Valentine's  
gift



that keeps  
on  
growing

It's easier  
than you  
think to give  
your true  
love blooms  
year-round

