

# Growing Shrub Roses in Montana

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**This guide tells how to choose plants, prepare a site and care for shrub roses. Includes a chart of roses that thrive in Montana's climate.**

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## **MONTANA'S CLIMATE IS ONLY MARGINALLY**

suitable for growing most types of roses, but shrub roses do well here. Many types, including species and interspecific hybrids, fall into this class. All have a bushy, dense, shrub-like form and some can grow quite large. They are decorative as specimen or accent plants or when planted in shrub borders. Their flowers are beautiful and many have delicate, fine-textured foliage and bear attractive hips in the fall. Most are hardy and vigorous and require little care under our severe conditions.

## **Purchasing plants**

Buy your plants from a reputable nearby nursery. If no local nursery carries the cultivars you want, purchase them from a reputable Northern nursery. Plants produced by Southern nurseries, though they may be the same cultivar as those offered by a Northern nursery, are not acclimated to our conditions and may not do as well in your garden. Plants on their own roots and graded as "Number 1" are the best. These have three to four vigorous canes.

## **Choosing the best site**

A good planting site receives at least six to eight hours of sun daily during the growing season. The flowers of roses planted on a site with a southeast exposure that receives some afternoon shade retain their color longer than those exposed to full, hot afternoon sun. Morning shade promotes the development of some diseases such as blackspot since the leaves remain moist with dew for a longer period of time. Be sure your site has good air circulation to reduce the chance of disease.

Soil structure is not as important as its drainage capacity. Roses will not thrive where water does not readily drain or where the water table can rise to within a couple of feet of the soil surface. If you need to improve drainage, work peat moss and/or sand into the soil before planting.

Soil should be slightly acid to neutral with a pH of about 6.5 to 7.0. Roses in strongly alkaline soils, with a pH near 8.0, will develop chlorosis, or yellowing of the leaves, due to the unavailability of soil iron.

Shrub roses make much larger plants than hybrid tea roses, so be sure to allow about enough room for each plant to develop to its full size.

## **Preparing the soil**

Prepare the soil in the fall or in the spring at least a month before planting. Work in five or six bushels per 100 square feet of organic matter such as compost, leaf mold or peat moss. Composted or dehydrated manure is also acceptable. If you use manure, add one-half pound of superphosphate or equivalent to each bushel to supply additional phosphorus. Spread the organic matter about four inches deep over the entire bed and spade it in. Roots of many roses will extend at least two feet into the soil, so work it at least to that depth. If you are preparing individual planting holes, mix the soil from the holes thoroughly with organic matter, using one part of organic matter to four parts of soil.

## **Planting**

Plant shrub roses in early spring as soon as the ground can be worked and while the plants are still dormant. If your stock has arrived but you must delay planting for a couple of days, unpack the roses, moisten the packing material, then repack them. If you must hold them for a longer period of time, bury them completely in a trench outside (heel them in).

Plant spacing depends upon which species and cultivar you plant and upon the effect you wish to create. For example, the Austrian Briar Rose (*Rosa foetida*) can reach a height of several feet. If you want the plants to remain as individual specimens, space them six to eight feet apart,

or closer if you want a hedge. To get a rough idea of spacing, allow as much space for the spread of the plant as the ultimate height of the plant. Decide on your spacing, then dig the planting holes at least 12 inches deep and 18 inches in diameter. Loosen the soil in the bottom and at the sides of the hole.

When you're ready to plant, trim any dead or injured roots, remove diseased, dead or injured canes, and cut the remaining canes back to about a foot in length. Flowering is often delayed if they're trimmed shorter than that.

Don't expose the roots to the sun or wind during planting, but keep them wrapped in damp sphagnum moss or burlap until they are placed into the planting hole. Never wrap long roots around the inside of the planting hole, but trim them to fit the diameter of the hole (Figure 1).

Wrapping roots around the hole can cause them to grow in a circle, eventually girdling and killing the plant.

If your plants were grafted, set them with the bud union about two inches below the soil surface. Spread the roots so they slope in a natural position along a cone of soil. Be careful not to break any roots. Fill the hole with prepared soil and firm it about the root system. This helps eliminate air pockets that could damage the roots.

When the hole is half full of soil, fill it to the top with water. When the water has drained, fill the remainder of the hole with soil and water thoroughly again. Finally, mound about eight inches of soil over the bush to protect it against late frost. Remove this when danger of frost has passed.

## Caring for your roses

Roses need a large amount of water. Thoroughly soak the soil to a depth of about 10 inches once each week. Frequent, light watering is useless. To discourage diseases, try not to wet the foliage.

Apply no fertilizer the year of planting. Begin the year after planting by applying a complete fertilizer, such as 5-10-10, each spring at the rate of about three pounds per 100 square feet per year. Apply half the fertilizer when the new growth is a few inches long and the rest near the end of June. Don't apply any after the Fourth of July.

Your leaves may turn yellowish-white from lack of iron, particularly if your soil is strongly alkaline. If so, spray your plants with ferrous sulfate at the rate of one ounce to two gallons of water, or with iron chelates such as Sequestrene 330, mixed according to directions on the label. Also, acidifying the soil should help. If the soil pH is between 7.0 and 7.5, apply one pound of garden sulfur per 100 square feet. If it's near 8.0, use two pounds, and if it's above 8.5, use three pounds per 100 square feet. You can purchase garden sulfur at your local nursery supply store.

The plants usually benefit greatly from several inches of organic mulch. Be sure the soil is wet before you apply the mulch. A dry mulch can absorb moisture from the soil.

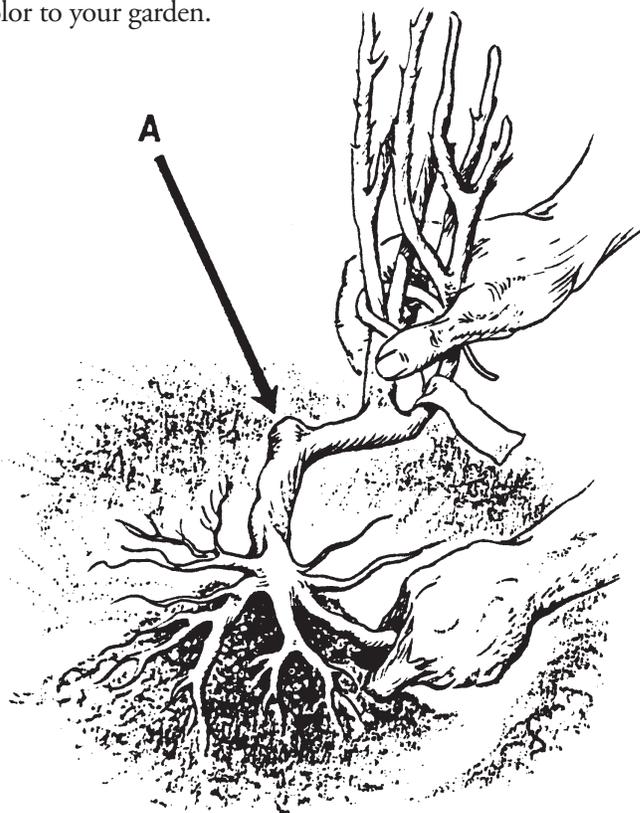
Shrub roses require little pruning. Simply remove the dead, unhealthy or crowding branches to maintain a bush of pleasing shape.

Rake and discard all fallen leaves and fruit to help keep the site as pest-free as possible. If you live in a windy location, erect a snow fence or burlap barrier to the windward side of the bush to reduce winter drying of the shoots. Erect the barrier in October and remove it in April. Also, water the plants well in fall after the leaves have turned color but before the ground freezes. This will ensure that the plants have as much water as they need going into the drying winter.

## Flowering

Shrub roses do not bloom all summer like others. Though a number of cultivars are repeat or continuous bloomers, most are not. Plant different cultivars to lengthen the time you can enjoy your roses.

Pick off spent blooms on young roses to spare the plants the need to mature their fruit; their energy is best put back into root growth or storing carbohydrates for winter. After the bush is well established, let it form hips to add autumn color to your garden.



**FIGURE 1.** Form a small cone-shaped pile of soil in the bottom center of the planting hole. Set the plant on this and spread the roots uniformly around the hole while at the same time adjusting the planting depth. If your plants were grafted, the bud union (A) should be about two inches below the soil level.

<i>Rosa</i> sp.	Common Name	USDA Zone
<i>Rosa acicularis</i>	Prickly Rose*	5
<i>Rosa arkansana</i>	Prairie Rose*	5
<i>Rosa Beggerana</i>	–	4
<i>Rosa blanda</i>	Meadow Rose	2
<i>Rosa carolina</i>	Carolina Rose	4
<i>Rosa cinnamomea</i>	Cinnamon Rose	5
<i>Rosa Fedtschenkoana</i>	–	4 +/-
<i>Rosa foetida</i> 'Bicolor'	Austrian Copper	5
<i>Rosa foetida</i>	Austrian Briar Rose	5
<i>Rosa nutkana</i>	Nootka Rose*	6
<i>Rosa pendulina</i>	Alpine Rose	6
<i>Rosa rugosa</i>	Rugosa Rose	2
<i>Rosa spinosissima</i>	Scotch Rose	5
<i>Rosa virginiana</i>	Virginia Rose	3
<i>Rosa Woodsii</i>	Woods' Rose*	4

\*Species native to Montana

**TABLE 1.** Species that have succeeded in parts of Montana. Some tolerate winter temperatures of -45°F, while some, like the Alpine and Nootka roses, do better in warmer areas of the state, and have survived on protected planting sites.

**TABLE 2.** Shrub roses that do well in Montana with little or no care.

	Cultivar	Color	Form	Zone	Size (ft) HxW	Vigor	Season	Fragrance	Black Spot
Pink	Belle Poitevine	med. pink	sd	3-4	5x5	smv	r	ff	BS-0
	Fru Dagmar Hastrup	med. pink	s	2-3	4x3	low	c	fff	BS-0
	Jens Munk	med. pink	sd	2-3	5x5	smv	c	ff	BS-0
	John Davis	med. pink	d	3	5x3	vig	c	ff	BS-0
	Martin Frobisher	pink	d	3	3x4	vig	c	ff	BS-0
	Morden Blush	pink	d	4	3x3	vig	r	f	BS-0
	Morden Centennial	pink	d	3	3x4	smv	r	ff	BS-1
	Pink Grootendorst	med. pink	d	3-4	4'	smv	c	f	BS-1
	Red Leaf Rose ( <i>R. rugosa rubrifolia</i> )	pink	s	2	5x6	smv	sp	ff	BS-0
	<i>R. rugosa</i>	red pink	sd	2	6x6	vig	r	fff	BS-0
	<i>R. rugosa</i> 'Rubra'	red pink	r	2	6x6	vig	r	fff	BS-0
	Therese Bugnet	pink	d	2	5x4	vig	r	fff	BS-0
	William Baffin	pink	d	3	9'	cli	c	f	BS-0
	Adelaide Hoodless	red	sd	3	3x3	smv	c	f	BS-0
Red	Austrian Copper	orange red	s	3-4	6x6	smv	s	f	BS-3
	Champlain	deep red	sd	4	2x2	low	c	f	BS-0
	Cuthbert Grant	red	d	3	3x3	smv	c	f	BS-0
	F.J. Grootendorst	med. red	d	3-4	2x3	low	c	f	BS-1
	Grootendorst Supreme	deep red	d	3-4	3x3	vig	c	f	BS-1

Table 2 continued on page 4.

(TABLE 2. Continued.)

	Cultivar	Color	Form	Zone	Size (ft) HxW	Vigor	Season	Fragrance	Black Spot
Red	Hansa	red	d	3	7x7	vig	r	fff	BS-0
	Henry Kelsey	red	d	3	6x7	cli	r	fff	BS-0
	John Cabot	red	d	3	7x6	cli	c	f	BS-0
	John Franklin	red	d	3	3x4	smv	r	ff	BS-0
	Morden Fireglow	red	d	4	3x3	low	r	f	BS-2
Yellow	Harison's yellow	med. yellow	sd	3	5x6	smv	sp	f	BS-1
	Morden Sunrise	yellow orange	sd	3	2x3	low	c	fff	BS-1
	Persian yellow	deep yellow	d	3-4	5x5	smv	s	f	BS-3
	Blanc Double de Coubert	white	sd	2-3	5x4	vig	r	fff	BS-0
	Henry Hudson	white	d	2-3	4x3	low	c	fff	BS-0
White	Marie Bugnet	white	sd	3	3x3	vig	r	fff	BS-1
	R. rugosa 'Alba'	white	s	2-3	6x6	smv	r	fff	BS-0
	Snow Pavement	white	sd	3	3x3	smv	r	ff	BS-0

**LEGEND**

**Form:** This refers to the flower form: s = single; s+ = slightly more than single; sd = semi-double; d = double; vd = very double or quartered.

**Zone:** USDA hardiness zone. Most of eastern Montana falls within Zone 3, central Montana in Zone 4, extreme western Montana in Zone 5.

**Vigor:** smv = semi-vigorous; cli = climber; vig = vigorous; low = low growing compact.

**Season:** sp = spring; s = summer; r = repeat bloomer; c = continuous bloomer.

**Fragrance:** f = little or none; ff = moderately fragrant; fff = exceptionally fragrant.

**Black spot:** Roses are subject to several diseases, but the most important is black spot, particularly for gardeners in the more humid western sections. BS-0 = Immune or nearly so; BS-1 = Less than 25% of the foliage usually affected; BS-2 = Some defoliation without protection; BS-3 = most foliage affected, heavy defoliation without protection.



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