

Growing Roses in the Pacific Northwest

Roses have been popular plants for centuries.

Roses can be grown in most parts of the world, and they thrive in many areas. Unfortunately, the Pacific Northwest is not one of these places.

Our long periods of moisture and cool temperatures make ideal disease conditions. Roses are especially vulnerable to rust, black spot and powdery mildew diseases. They are also a favorite of aphids and other insects. Roses are high-maintenance plants in the Pacific Northwest. They are not part of our regular tree and shrub care program.

What you can do

- Purchase disease-resistant plants. Disease-resistant means just that, resistant. Under the ideal conditions, roses can still develop disease problems.
- Plant roses where they get plenty of sun—at least six hours a day—and good air circulation.
- Remove all leaves up to 1 to 1-1/2 feet off the ground to prevent water from splashing onto them.
- Do not prune your roses too early. A good time to prune roses is March 1st. Pruning too early can force growth that can be susceptible to a cold spell.
- When pruning, always prune out all the dead and diseased wood. Cut out the old wood by cutting below the wood into healthy tissue. Larger cuts may need to have a pruning sealer applied to

the wound. Pruning cuts should be done so that the upper bud is facing the outside of the plant. Roses require and respond well to proper pruning.

Try these to treat rose diseases

- For powdery mildew (but not black spot): Put one teaspoon of baking soda into a quart of water. Add a few drops of dishwashing liquid (not detergent). Spray the mixture weekly in spring before disease symptoms appears. The baking soda alters the pH of the leaf surface enough that disease organisms find it difficult to colonize the surface.
- A new product called Messenger (harpin protein) increases the resistance of plants to diseases. It provokes an immune response in the plant similar to a vaccination in humans.
- Some less-toxic fungicides are on the market. They contain sulfur, neem oil or potassium bicarbonate (similar to baking soda).
- In Harmony doesn't advise any other treatment for rose diseases. Most other fungicides are toxic to humans and the environment.

Resources

The Seattle Rose Society has a list of disease-resistant roses. Visit our web site for a link.

