

Planting Bareroot Roses, Mini-Roses & Spring Pruning (Mar-1-2007)

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If you ordered roses from the mail order nurseries, they should be arriving right about now. Each year I hope and pray that they will arrive when the weather is perfect for planting. That rarely happens! If you are unable to plant your roses within a few days of their arrival, there are some precautions you can take to ensure their survival and potential growth. First, keep them in a cool dark place. Open the box or package to check that the roots have not dried out. They are normally packaged in some sort of protective wrapping, newspaper or similar material. It should be moist but not sopping wet.

You can also remove them from the packaging and place them in a bucket of water so that the roots and bud union are completely submerged. They can be held like this for a few days to a week, in a cool dark location. They will need to be monitored closely for any sign of rot or fungus and the water should be changed every few days, if kept longer.

Bare root roses are generally planted directly in the garden, but you can also plant them in containers. Some rosarians claim to have much better results by growing their roses in containers for most of the first season, before planting in the garden. This method allows for good development of the root system in controlled environment. Bare root roses and mail order minis (which arrive in 2-4" pots) can be planted in a suitable size container, using Miracle-Gro Potting Soil as the medium. Other similar mixtures such as Schultz, can also be used. This type of potting soil will be lighter, making the containers much lighter and easier to move around. Miracle-Gro Potting Soil also contains a time release fertilizer and water retaining crystals that help ensure the success of the plant.

Protect the canes of the newly planted roses from drying out by mounding up the soil so that only one to two inches of the cane is left exposed. Misting the exposed canes lightly, as needed, will also insure that they do not dry out while waiting for them to leaf out. Once the bush begins to leaf out, the mounded soil can be "gently" removed so that the emerging growth is not broken off.

Roses planted in containers need to be monitored closely so that they never dry out completely. At this time of year, Mother Nature usually does a good job of watering, but keep an eye on your garden-planted and container-planted new arrivals. If it doesn't rain enough, you will need to water.

It is very important that mail order miniature roses be repotted within a few days of receiving. A mini that comes to you in a 2-4" pot should go into a 6" pot and can remain in that size container for the entire season. If left in the small pot it will not have ample room for the root system to establish and will die.

March is the month to begin spring pruning. Remove all dead, diseased and damaged wood. Next remove the twiggy and crossing canes. Your aim is to open the center of the bush, to promote good air circulation and reduce the possibility of fungus diseases and insect infestations. Reduce the height of your bush by about one third, cutting the canes on a 45-degree angle until you see that the inside of the cane (the pith) is white, indicating you have reached healthy tissue. Cut the cane so that there is a bud at the top of the angle, facing out from the center of bush. This will allow the emerging cane to grow away the

center of the bush, leaving the center uncluttered. Remember not to prune the once blooming Old Garden Roses now or you will cut off the blooms that would come in June. They are pruned immediately after they finish blooming. Also remember to remove and discard all pruning debris from the garden.

March is also the time to apply your first application of fertilizer. You can use a time release fertilizer, such as Osmocote, which lasts for 6 months or a fertilizer that will need to be placed monthly, such as a basic 5-10-5 or one that has been specifically formulated for roses.

Mills Magic Rose Mix is an excellent source of organic matter and helps to enrich the soil. It is applied in addition to your fertilizer. Remember to have your soil tested to ensure you are giving it what it needs. Happy Spring!