

# Home & Garden

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## For beautiful roses, follow a few basic guidelines

By ELLEN M. SCARANO, Staff Writer

Just remember in the winter, Far beneath the bitter snows, Lies the seed that with the sun's love, In the spring becomes the rose."

-- "The Rose," lyrics by Amanda McBroom

Roses may be the queen of all flowers, but there's no need to be intimidated by them.

Maybe the first thing to know is that roses like good dirt. We have a lot of clay in our soil in Anne Arundel County, but that can be amended easily enough.

Kara Mingo, owner of Good Earth Gardeners LLC in Annapolis says that when planting a new rose in clay soil, dig out a big hole 18-inches deep by 18-inches wide. Remove that dirt from the area and fill it with a mixture of 2/3 organic soil, like Leafgro, and 1/3 sand.

"Imagine you're digging a small pond for your rose - for drainage," she says.

Replacing the heavy clay soil with good dirt provides drainage so the rose won't be standing in water, getting "wet feet." Sometimes water can be too much of a good thing.

Different areas have different qualities to the soil. Ms. Mingo has noticed that gardens in downtown Annapolis have good sandy and loamy soil. Not far from the center of the city, soil does contain a lot of clay. Soil in nearby Arnold tends to need amending while the Eastern Shore has good soil.

Part of Ms. Mingo's business is rejuvenating roses that have been neglected or overgrown. Recovery can take a couple of years.

For a bush that's inadvertently become a hedge, cut it back to half its volume in late winter or early spring.

The next year cut the part of the plant that was left last year. You'll be able to tell the older, slightly woody branches from the new, green growth.

"By the third year, it won't be skeletal looking," adds Ms. Mingo.

When pruning a rose, cut any branches that are touching or crossing over each other or going in a weird direction.

If a section looks diseased or has been broken, cut it back a little to the next fresh area.

Because of the heat and high humidity in Maryland, Ms. Mingo says she recommends floribunda over tea roses. She thinks tea or English roses thrive better in cooler, less humid weather and seem to acquire black spot regularly in our climate.

#### Diseases

Black spot is a fungus that look like burns on the leaves, which wither and fall off.

Snip the affected leaves off or pick them up from around the plant and throw them away in the trash. They should not be added to a compost pile. Wipe down the pruners with a little bleach on a rag to help prevent spreading the fungus to other roses.

Ms. Mingo says some roses are tougher than others and it's OK to let the black spot run its course before using chemicals to eradicate it, though she has used Ortho's Rose Pride when necessary.

To prevent powdery mildew don't do overhead watering such as with a sprinkler.

"Little droplets spread from leaf to leaf spreading black spot and powdery mildew," she says.

#### Insect invasion

The bags used to lure Japanese beetles into a trap should be placed in a sunny spot about 10 feet away from the roses.

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Ms. Mingo notes that "bags have been close to the rose and bugs seem to stop and have a last meal before going into the bag!"

Removing them by hand is also helpful and kids might enjoy doing it. Ms. Mingo's mother used to pay her a penny a bug, she remembers.

"You can also buy praying mantis egg cases and hatch them and they will hang around your rosebushes and they will take care of those nasty aphids in the flowers," advises Ms. Mingo.

Beetles also leave evidence of their presence by holes in the leaves. Aphids eat the juicy buds and the blooms can be deformed as a result.

To remove aphids, try a natural approach with 16 ounces of water with about a teaspoon or so of dish soap. Spray it on the leaves. The soap irritates the aphid.

Horticultural oils get rid of insects but the oil has to touch the insect or its egg cases which suffocates them. The problem is that the oil will kill all the insects whether good or bad.

Ms. Mingo suggests waiting until evening to spray poison. The bad bugs will be on the plant overnight while the good bugs, like bees, will be gone by dusk or dark.

Rose choices

Ms. Mingo says people say they don't like rose bushes because they become ugly. She relates the best tip she ever heard was to surround roses with a 2-foot tall evergreen hedge. The roses' flowers are seen but its less desirable parts are covered by the hedge like a giant centerpiece.

Roses need sun in order to bloom. A floribunda needs 6 hours or more or it will get leggy and won't have many blooms. If you have less, says Ms. Mingo, four hours of afternoon sun might be enough. If not, dig it up and move it.

Some tea roses are bred to stand the Maryland climate. A favorite of Ms. Mingo's is a climbing shrub rose by Jackson & Perkins, a big name in roses, called the "Ballerina."

"It has white flowers, a flush of pink. They bloom magnificently and are slightly fragrant," she says.

For a potted rose, she recommends the "Crystal Fairy" also by Jackson & Perkins. She had one that was seriously neglected for three years running, had black spot, completely dried out except for whatever rain it got. It's still alive and blooming this spring with white flowers.

"THAT is a hardy rose," she commented.

She finds that most people forget to cut roses back and water potted varieties.

For climbing roses, don't be afraid to cut them back in late winter or early spring or they'll get scraggly. Remember to provide support, such as a trellis, for climbing.

Some grow faster than others, so a rule of thumb is to stick with keeping 2/3 of the plant, cutting back 1/3. Cut to the bud but not to the middle of the branch. Whenever you cut, try to do it to 45 degree angle, and at the next group of five leaves, where a new bud can appear.

The angle encourages rain run off so that it doesn't enter the stem, causing splitting as the moisture expands and contracts and helps to prevent disease from entering as well.

For the more adventurous gardener, David Austin is another brand of English roses, for which there are several adaptable to life here.

Treat yourself. Cut the roses and bring them inside to enjoy.

Contact Good Earth Gardeners LLC at calling 410-212-7014 or e-mail [kbmingo@yahoo.com](mailto:kbmingo@yahoo.com).

For rose information, and photos, visit [www.jacksonperkins.com](http://www.jacksonperkins.com).

Are you a member of a community garden club? If you would like to be a contact for information to be used for a story, send your name, address, daytime phone number and e-mail address to [homeandgarden@capitalgazette.com](mailto:homeandgarden@capitalgazette.com) or call Ellen at 410-280-5969, Ext. 3502.

- No Jumps-

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