



Bare-Root Roses

Bare-root roses may look deceiving when first purchased, with their absent leaves and brown roots, but once planted, and given proper care, you will receive beautiful blooms. The reason for the absence of leaves and brown roots is due to the fact that bare-root roses are in a dormant state, which prevents transplant shock and allows for easier planting. It is best to plant them in the spring and late fall when our weather is most temperate, and I tend to look at purchasing grade 1 rose bushes, which are 2 to 3 years old, compared with the younger grade 2 bushes. Grade 1 rose bushes normally have 2 to 4 strong, healthy canes, and tend to be the heartiest. Bare root roses that have spindly canes or roots, or have started to leaf out, will have less chance or survival.

A few of my favorite types of bare-root roses:

- Don Juan: red, blooms in the second year
- Gene Borner: pink, can be grown as a shrub
- Showbiz: red, easy to grow (requires very little work)
- Mr. Lincoln: large, red easy to grow in the valley
- Chrysler Imperial: red, a hybrid tea-style plant
- Margo Koster: light pinkish tone, produces small roses

When planting bare-root roses you will first want to select the ideal location. I prefer the east side of my home so that they will receive morning sunlight, and at least 6 hours of total sunlight a day. Next, you will want to soak them in a bucket of water with a capful of liquid seaweed added for 12-24 hours prior to planting, so as to plump up the roots and canes. You will then want to dig a hole approximately 18 inches deep by 18 inches wide, and then fill the hole half-way up with water. Watch the water to be sure it drains at least 1 inch of water per hour, so as to ensure proper soil drainage. In the center of the planting hole, add 1 to 2 cups soft phosphate, 1 cup soil sulfur, 1 cup gypsum, and ½ cup rock phosphate and Texas Greensand to the bottom of the cone. Using two shovels of soil, mix the phosphate mixture into the soil and dig a cone shape into the ground. Face the bud union (looks like a knob) to the east. Remove the packing sawdust and trim any broken roots. Spread the rose's roots over the cone and backfill with a 50/50 mix of soil and compost. Keep the bud union about 2 inches above the final grade. If planting multiple bushes be sure to plant them 3 to 4 feet apart.

When caring for you roses you will want to remember to water your roses slowly and deeply to keep the plant from drying out, and to prevent air pockets. If the rose seems to settle too deeply, gently lift the plant and add more of the 50/50 mixture; continue to water. You will want to water your roses every other day for the first 2 weeks. To protect the canes from drying out cover them with straw or moist peat moss; remove covering when new growth starts.