

Planting Shrubs & Roses

Many shrubs and roses can be planted 2-4 feet apart depending on the variety width at maturity.

Preparation:

If you have hard/clay soil you may want to add sand and/or organic matter to the soil that you will be putting back in the hole. This will lessen the compacting of the dirt around the root system after planting. Should your soil be loose/sandy soil, adding topsoil and/or organic matter will help to build the quality of the soil going back into the hole. After planting apply 2-3 inches of mulch forming a well around the base of each plant during spring/summer to help minimize weeds and keep the plants cooler and moister. In fall, apply more mulch to give the plants at least 3 inches deep to help blanket the root system over winter.

Clip any broken or damaged tips/branches that may have occurred during transit or while waiting for planting.

Fertilizing:

Don't fertilize during the first year in the ground. Applying aged compost or other organic matter will be more beneficial to the plants than any fertilizer. The second year, wait for the shrubs to begin to leaf out before beginning any fertilizing program. Check with your local hardware store for their recommendations on the plants that you are growing. A time release formula is great. Follow the directions on the fertilize package. Many abuse easy mix and liquid fertilizers such as Miracle Gro. Studies have shown that over use of these types of products will build up a high level of saline in the soil. Plants in the fertilized area will die as well as any future replants. It takes 3-5 years for the ground to become plantable again.

Bare Root:

Dig holes 8-14 inches wide and 12 -14 inches deep. Put about 2 inches of water into the hole and allow the water to be soaked into the ground. While water is being soaked in, remove the plastic wrap and shredded newspaper from the roots. Holding the plant steady just above the root collar (the lighter line above the root system, where the soil came to on its original planting) level with the ground level, pull soil back into the hole with the other hand. Fill the hole around the root system with your soil mixture and lightly press soil in around the base of the plant. Water the plant again about the same amount as it took to fill in the 2 inches of the hole. (Water amount will vary with conditions) The soil around the base of the plant may sink in and you will need to apply more soil and lightly press down. Then apply 2-3 inches of mulch forming a well around the base of each plant. For the first month, water plant every 4-5 days adjusting for good rainfall days. Gradually phase into watering less and less allowing the plant to stress for itself to find moisture. You may need to water more frequently during the hottest part of summer, possibly going back to every 4-5 days, especially during drought conditions.

Container:

Dig holes 8-14 inches wide and 12 -14 inches deep. Put about 2 inches of water into the hole and allow the water to be soaked into the ground. While water is being soaked in, tap the container bottom on the ground and cupping the plant base and top of container with one hand, tip the container completely over and gently pry the plants root system out of the pot. Holding the root system, with soil, in both hands firmly, gently pull the bottom of the root system as though to tear the bottom apart. Don't pull the root system apart, only loosen it up and allow the roots to stretch. Holding the plant steady at the base of the trunk, where the soil level begins, and level with the ground, pull soil back into the hole with the other hand. Fill the hole around the roots and container soil with your soil mixture and lightly press soil in around the base of the plant. Water the plant again about the same amount as it took to fill in the 2 inches of the hole. (Water amount will vary with conditions) The soil around the base of the plant may sink in and you will need to apply more soil and lightly press down. Then apply 2-3 inches of mulch forming a well around the base of each plant. For the first month, water plant every 4-5 days adjusting for good rainfall days. Gradually phase into watering less and less allowing the plant to stress for itself to find moisture. You may need to water more frequently during the hottest part of summer, possibly going back to every 4-5 days, especially during drought conditions.

Care Tips for Shrubs & Roses:**Buddleias:**

Buddleias can be planted in full/partial sun with 4 to 8 foot spacing. They generally look their best in groupings of 3 to 5 plants. Alkaline soil (pH 6.5 to 7.0) is usually preferred. Fertilize in spring/summer with a slow release fertilizer. Deadheading them will keep the plants blooming longer during the season. Buddleias can be cut back nearly to the ground in winter. As they age, you may find yourself with more of a shrub that can be merely pruned in winter. One of the most common problems that buddleias experience is spider mites, which can be handled with regular (monthly) spraying of a miticide. Check for spider mites by taking a piece of plain white paper and placing it under several of the branches/leaves, tap the higher branches. If you see tiny red/rust colored spots on the paper, the plant is infected.

Hibiscus, also known as Althea and Rose of Sharon:

They will begin blooming around mid summer and continue blooming on until frost. Hibiscus will grow in partial shade, but they do prefer full to mostly sunny areas. Late winter/early spring is the best time to prune out any dead branches and shape the plants. Put down a 2-3 inch thick layer of mulch around each plant, creating a well next to the

plant. As soon as the plants begin to produce the seasons' new growth a timed release fertilizer such as a 10-10-10 can be applied.

Rosa Rugosas:

Rosa rugosas are the easy to grow roses. Plant them in full to partial sun. The more sun they receive, the happier they will be. They are cold hardy, will survive on even the poorest of soils, including sandy soil and are disease resistant. Most all rosa rugosa varieties grow in the 4-6 foot tall range with a spread of about equal amount. After the first couple of years, a pruning in late winter/early spring will keep them looking neat. Just cut back the oldest canes and any broken/damaged canes at ground level. Rosa rugosa's don't typically like any chemical products. They prefer organic matter to fertilizing. When watering them, it is safer to err on the less side. It is easy to over water them. Let the soil dry out a couple of days between watering.

Knock-Out Roses:

The Knock-Out Roses do exhibit resistance to one of the more common diseases to roses, black spot and other nuisance diseases. Like all roses, they do enjoy sun, but will also perform just as nicely in as little as 4 hours of sun per day. Morning sun would be preferable so it could dry of the morning dew from the leaves/flowers helping to prevent any damage. Organic fertilizers are more often recommended over the synthetic versions. Plant your Knock-Out Roses in a well drained, well aerated soil with lots of good organic matter. A good soil mixture would be one fourth peat moss or aged manure and three quarters soil/topsoil. Be sure to water thoroughly after planting to prevent any air pockets near the roots. You may need to apply more soil to the top after it is watered and the soil settles.

Although dead heading isn't necessary, I am guilty of clipping off the spent blooms, especially early in the season. Personally, I felt that the shrubs looked healthier with them off. With the spent blooms off, the plants seem to focus more on producing newer buds/blooms.

These plants provide a lot of enjoyment for the money. They begin blooming around June (here in zone 7) and continue blooming beautifully until a harsh frost nips them.

Hydrangeas:

Hydrangeas grow and bloom the best in morning sun with afternoon shade. Don't expect them to do well in heavy shade. The PG variety is hardy enough to grow in full sun.

They prefer plenty of moisture and should be monitored for additional watering over the first and second year after planting and especially during droughts.

Hydrangeas enjoy a regular fertilizing schedule. A good slow (timed) release applied 1-2 times a year will keep them happy. In zones 6-8, fertilize in May and July. For zones 5 and further north, one good fertilizing in June will work due to the shorter growing season. Follow the directions on the fertilizer label. Don't apply fertilize if the plant is wilted or looks otherwise not happy. Take care of the problem and then apply fertilize. The different varieties of hydrangeas require specific pruning times or blooms for the following year may be lost. Regardless of the variety always remove any dead or broken

stems/branches. As the plants age and become mature, prune out about 1/3 of the stems/branches back to ground level. This will keep the shrubs looking healthy.

Pruning hydrangeas

Annabelle: Plant 3-4 feet apart. Prune back to about 18-24 inches tall. This plant blooms on new wood and can be pruned back during fall/winter or anytime except during spring when it is preparing to bloom. In the north, it may die back to the ground each year producing new growth each spring.

White Dome, Limelight, Tardiva and PG (Paniculatas): Blooms during mid/late summer and can be pruned during fall/winter or early spring. (Blooms on new wood) As the plant ages, Paniculata blooms often turn a pinkish shade.

Alice, Snowflake, Cardinal Red, Forever Pink, and Nikko Blue: Prune these varieties in summer (after blooming), but before August. By August, they may have already set their buds for blooming the following year much like azaleas and rhododendrons. They bloom on the old wood, which means the new growth produced after they have completed their blooming in late spring/early summer.

Climbing Hydrangea: Plant growth will be improved by adding organic matter such as aged manure/compost to the soil. Not a fast grower and takes several years to establish after planting. Because it is a vine type plant, other than pruning out any dead branches that are reachable, not much is required to keep it looking good.

Changing the bloom color:

A lot of people send in questions on how to change the bloom color of their hydrangea plants. A white blooming hydrangea will not change to pink or blue no matter what is done to the soil. Although as the white bloomer ages, often the blooms will take on a pinkish shade.

In hot areas, a red hydrangea doesn't usually produce a true red color.

For Pink blooms: A pH of 6.0 to 6.2 is needed. Add dolomite lime several times a year. Recommended: High Phosphorus fertilizer (ratio close to 25/10/10). This will help to limit the amount of aluminum being absorbed by the plant.

For Blue blooms: A pH of 5.2 to 5.5 is need here. I have read that a solution of ½ oz (1 Tbsp) aluminum sulfate per gallon of water applied to plants which are at least 2-3 years old throughout the growing season will produce blue blooms. Water well before applying the solution and do be cautious in applying as too much can burn the roots. Use a low Phosphorus fertilizer such as a ratio of 25/5/30. Bone should be avoided when attempting to change the color to blue. A natural way to encourage the color change to blue is to apply organic matter to the soil such as coffee grounds, fruit/vegetable peels, grass clippings and other items you would normally add to compost.

The pH of the water should not be any higher than 5.6. Also, planting the hydrangeas next to a concrete foundation or walkway will affect the color and raise the pH with lime seeping out into the soil.

Lilacs:

Lilacs are considered colder climate plants and rarely grow well south of zone 7. They grow best in full sun with well-drained soil that is neutral to slightly alkaline. Lilacs set their blooms in summer for blooming the following year. So the time to prune them will be right after their blooms fade in late spring/early summer. Lilacs do tend to attract ants so they are better planted in hedges away from house foundations.