

!!! WARNING !!!

PLANTING NEW ROSES IN OLD ROSE BEDS

Reprinted from "Roses '97" by Gary Matsuoka
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Disappointing results often occur when planting new roses in old rose beds. There is a phenomenon that occurs when new roses are planted in soil that has been occupied by roses for many years. The new rose grows a bit, then becomes stunted, and may even decline. After many years the rose slowly recovers. It is fairly clear what the cause is, and what can be done.

Healthy rose plants constantly grow roots. Part of the root system is growing and dying. But the entire root mass is ever increasing. Soil surrounding each rose plant becomes heavily inlaid the rose roots.

If a well established rose is removed, the remaining soil will still contain a large amount of roots, most of which cannot be easily removed by hand. Because these roots are dying, the soil becomes filled with rose root decaying organisms. If a new healthy rose is planted into this soil, it will either be damaged by these root decaying organisms, or spend much of its energy fighting them off.

From my own experience, roses can be grown and replaced freely for the first 3 years of the rose bed's existence without major effects. Apparently the soil does not yet contain enough root matter to cause significant problems the bed is 5 years old, newly replaced roses are severely stunted for at least 2 years.

STEPS CAN BE TAKEN TO ENSURE THE VIGOR OF A REPLACEMENT ROSE

1. Remove as much soil as possible without severely damaging nearby roses. Replace this soil with soil from another part of the garden that doesn't contain roses. Plant the new rose into this rose root-free soil.
2. If soil replacement is not possible, pick out as much of the old roots from the soil as possible and heavily mulch the area before replanting. Organic mulches encourage populations of other soil organisms which will directly compete with (and hopefully subdue) the detrimental effects of rose root rot organisms.
3. Replant with a healthy rose plant. It may be necessary to grow one in a container for awhile especially if it was acquired as a bare root specimen. Larger well established rose plants can fight off rose root-rot organisms more successfully.