

THE BASIC NEEDS OF MINIATURE ROSES

By Marty Hammond

Miniature roses can be successfully grown in containers, or in the ground. If grown in a container, choose a potting soil that drains well and has at least 25% sand, 'Perlite' or 'pumice' in the soil mix. You may need to add this yourself, as few potting soils have enough. After planting, put about 1" of mulch on top of the soil to help the soil retain moisture and discourage weeds.

WATER: Miniature roses have feeder roots in the first 2-4" of soil. It's very important to water often. Don't let the plant dry out, but don't keep it soggy wet either. If the leaves start to have dried edges, that is usually a sign of not enough water. It may also be a sign of fertilizer burn, as miniature roses don't like full strength fertilizing until fully established.

SUNSHINE: Sunlight is critical and you need to place your mini's where it will get at least 5 hours of sunlight. White, yellow, and some lavender roses can grow very well in less sunlight, but they may become spindly in stature.

AIR CIRCULATION: There is a big danger of planting miniature roses too close together. They need good air circulation just like the larger roses, and because they are so close to the ground, this factor is sometimes neglected. If planted too close together, then you invite such pests as spider mites, and once they have invaded, it's hard to get rid of them.

DRAINAGE: Good drainage is essential for miniature roses. The water must percolate through the soil slow enough to dampen the soil, but yet the water must drain well so they do not get "wet feet". Standing water will kill them just as fast as too little water.

FERTILIZER: Feed just as you would a hybrid tea or floribunda rose, but only about 1/2 the strength till they are fully established. Feed organic fertilizers year round, and non-organic fertilizers in the cool months. Start feeding about March, and stop feeding about the middle of October. Remember, miniature roses have feeder roots very close to the surface, and these can be burned if fed too much non-organic fertilizer.

DEAD-HEAD: Keep the spent blooms removed. Cut about 1/4" above a 5 leaflet leaf that is pointing outward. The bud eye at the leaf is where new growth will come. Keep any dead stems removed and try to keep the area around the rose clean of debris. Spent blooms left on the ground encourages unwanted pests and disease.

WINTER PRUNE: You will want to prune your miniature rose about the same time you would prune your larger roses. Because of the many stems of most miniatures, it's very time consuming to cut each stem to the outward facing growth bud. To make it simple, just cut off about one-half to two-thirds of the existing growth. Or, my rule of thumb is: Micro minis cut down to about 6-8". Short or low growth mini's, cut to about 10". Medium growth mini's, cut to 10-12". Tall growth mini's cut to about 12-15". After new growth is established, you can go back and "manicure" the plant, to remove any dead growth.

DIVIDING AND/OR REPOTTING: Many varieties of miniature roses will grow wider with new growth, therefore it's a good idea to dig them every 3 or 4 years, and divide them. If they are container grown, then they will need to be re-potted every 3 or 4 years. If re-potting into the same container, then trim the roots 1-1 1/2" off the sides and 2" off the bottom, and return to the same pot with new soil filled in around them. If re-potting to a larger pot, the trimming may not be necessary, unless you determine it is needed.