

# Maintaining a rose garden is a cherished pastime

Whether it's Hybrid Teas, Floribundas or Grandifloras, roses make a wonderful accent to any home or garden. Maintaining a rose garden, as any rose lover will attest, is a cherished pastime, and not at all difficult.

If you are planning to create a rose garden this season, here are a few easy steps to planting and caring for your roses.

### Selecting a site

Choose a site that is well drained and receives about six hours of direct sunlight a day. Avoid planting near the roots of large trees or under roof overhangs. "One of the most important things to remember about roses is to give them plenty of water," says Joe Loconte, owner of Kennedy Greenhouses in Markham. "And don't plant them in shaded areas. The

more sun they receive, the better they'll grow."

Prepare your beds at least three weeks before planting, or as soon as the soil becomes workable.

### Planting

If you're working with a bare root plant, let's assume that you chose a plant with a large bud union, with three or more three-inch canes 12-15" long. A plant with one or more canes just emerging from the bud union is preferable.

The hole in the ground is a key consideration in planting roses. Dig a hole 2' wide x 2' deep. This depth is necessary for drainage. If your soil is loose and draining, you could get away with digging just 18" deep.

Once you have placed the rose plant in

the ground, back-fill the hole with a mixture of soil and peat until it's three quarters full. Pack the soil firmly around the roots. Fill the hole with water and let it drain.

### Fertilizing

Roses are thirsty flowers. When you are planting them in the ground for the first time, they are particularly in need of water and nutrients. Early on in the season you should be fertilizing with a granular fertilizer. Water soluble fertilizers, organic fertilizers and compost are okay, but for newly planted roses, don't fertilize until they have bloomed first.

The acidity or alkalinity of the soil is measured by its pH level. An improper range of pH will prevent roses from taking the necessary nutrients from the soil. Roses require a slightly higher acidic soil in the range of 6.0 to 6.6.

Experts recommend that soil for rose gardens be tested every two years.

### Watering

The key to proper watering is to water deeply. Experts agree that roses require

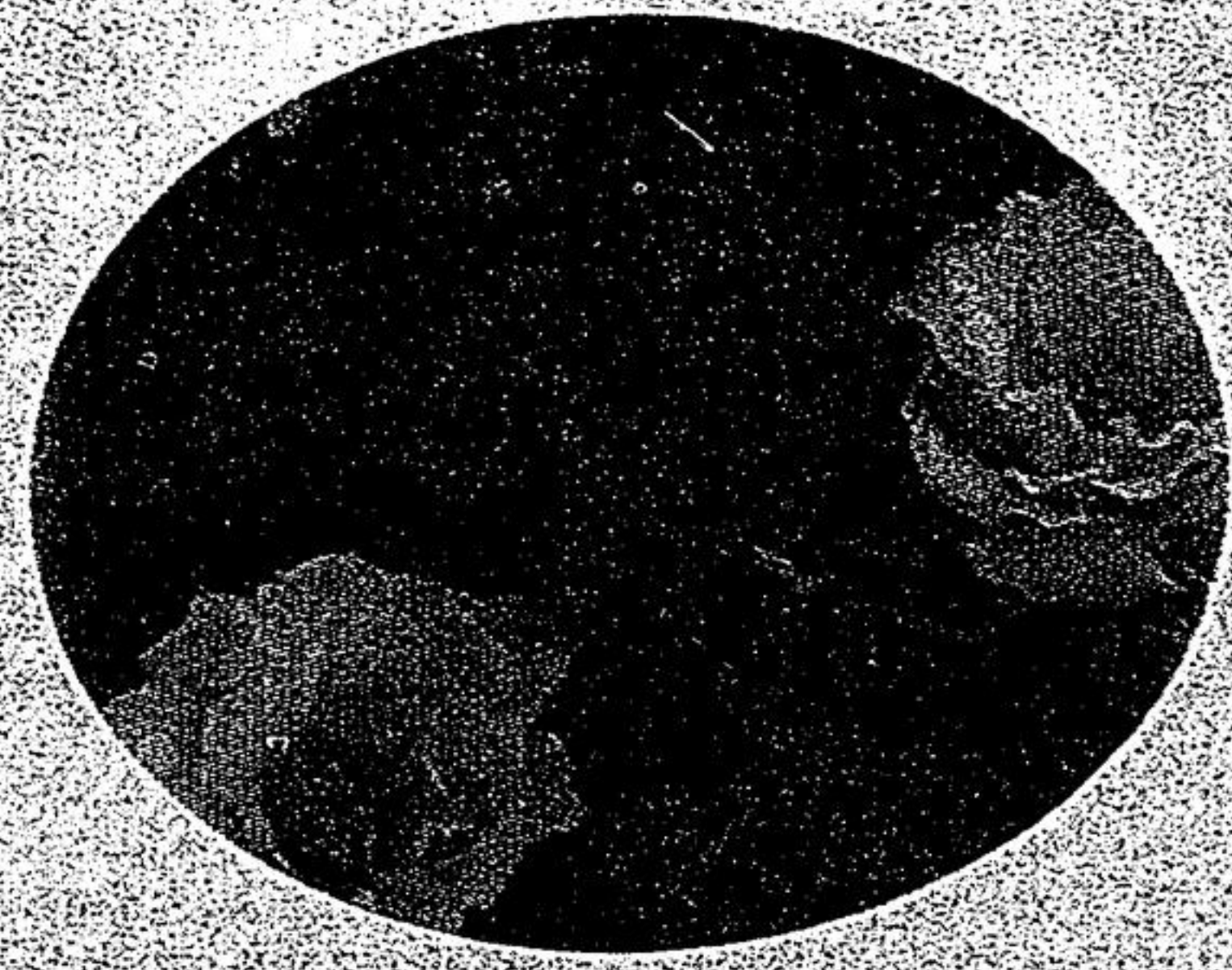
about one inch of water per week, preferably two inches a week during the growing season. Avoid light, frequent watering as it allows roots to form near the surface; these roots are more susceptible to droughts and winter freezes. The deeper the roots, the more durable the root system.

"One of the most important things to remember about roses is to give them plenty of water," says Joe Loconte, owner of Kennedy Greenhouses in Markham. "And don't plant them in shade. Roses

require a lot of sunshine and should be planted in sunlit areas."

Typically, damp and cool conditions invite diseases that are harmful to roses. When watering, make sure that your rose leaves are dry by nightfall. Try watering in the morning, or using a drip irrigation system.

Of course, it never hurts to get some professional advice from your local garden centre. There you'll receive not only friendly advice, but all the necessary buds, plants and fertilizers you'll need to beautify your garden.



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