

## Planting Bare Root Roses

Bare-root roses are dormant plants with the soil removed to reduce weight for shipping. While they may look disconcertingly like a bundle of sticks, don't be deceived by appearances. The plants were harvested in the fall when they were full of starch reserves. The plant will survive on the reserves until they break dormancy and put out leaves and roots.

What to do with bare root rose?

First, place the bare root roses in a bucket of water so the plant can re-hydrate. How long can the rose remain in water? "Depends" is the answer. If it is cold but not freezing, and you have added a few drops of bleach to reduce microbe activity, roses will keep for several days until you are ready to plant.

Plant the rose as soon as you can. Most knowledgeable rosarians start their plants in a pot. Why? The soil in a pot is warmer. Warmth encourages the plant to break dormancy and to develop a more extensive root system.

Once you are ready to plant, inspect your rose and remove all broken roots, weak or damaged stems. Use a good potting soil and plant the rose with the bud union above the soil line. Keep the soil well watered. If the rose doesn't start growing

leaves with two weeks check out the article on Peat Cone Theory on page 8.



Two looks from last year. The auction plant on the top is starting to leaf out; whereas, the one on the bottom has not begun to break dormancy. It is definitely going to be coned up until it the leaves emerge above the peat moss.



Once the plant has bloomed, which is usually late April, it is time to plant the rose in the garden.

How big should the hole be? Simply make the hole large enough so that no roots are bent or forced in unnatural directions. Personally, I fit the hole to the plant, not the plant to the hole. At the bottom of the hole place about a tablespoon of super phosphate or bone meal. This puts phosphate where it does the most good. (This nutrient which promotes root growth moves slowly through the soil.). Then add some organic fertilizer.

Now form a cone of soil in the hole and then place the plant on top. Look at the rose and decide how best to orient the rose – for example, if there are more healthy canes on one side than the other, place the "best side" facing the direction where it is most visible. Place the crown of the bush (the lump at the base of

the branches in a grafted bush or the base of the main stem in an own-root bush) above the level of the surrounding soil then backfill soil into the hole. I always amend the soil from the hole with some compost.

~Charlotte