KINGMAN IS GROWING! Column
PART I

A ROSE IN THE DESERT
By Margie Grimes, Kingman Area Master Gardener

No matter what, people want roses blooming in their yards. It doesn't matter about the amount of rain, or lack of it. It doesn't matter about the amount of sunshine, or too much of it. People love roses!

It is amazing how many different roses will flourish in various climates, so it should be no surprise that roses can thrive here in the parched Mohave desert.

The rose became the national flower in 1986. George Washington bred roses and a variety that he named after his mother is still grown today.

Roses need morning sun, afternoon shade and a minimum of six hours of full sunlight each day to produce abundantly.

Selecting roses

Roses can be purchased in containers or as bare root stock. Bare root stock are plants without soil around the roots. In the Southwest desert, gardeners can plant container roses anytime except in the heat of summer. Bare root roses are planted from the last half of December through February.

Select only graded No.1 roses for the best results. A No. 1 rose has three or more canes that are 14-18 inches long. On bare root roses, the buds and canes should be dormant.
There is a list of proven roses for Mohave County available at our local extension office.

**Site Selection**

Below 3,500 feet an east or north exposure is better for light-colored roses, such as pink, yellow, or white. This will help them fade less and burn less in hot weather because they will be protected from the afternoon sun. Reflected heat from light-colored south or west walls will injure rose bushes and climbers planted too close to these walls.

Do not locate the rose garden near large trees, tall hedges, or close to other plants. The roots of these plants will compete with the rose bushes for nutrients and moisture. Dense shade from trees or from an overhanging roof eave is unfavorable.

Roses do best grown in a bed set aside for this purpose rather than in individual holes or in combination with other plants.

Try to locate the rose garden in an area where there is good drainage.

**Soil Preparation**

Surprisingly, roses do well in a wide variety of soils. To get the best growth, the soil should be high in organic matter. Good drainage is desirable. This will aid in eliminating salt and prevent its accumulation.

To improve very sandy soils, mix in several inches of a clay loam soil infused with organic matter. For extremely heavy soils, mix in several inches of a sandy-type soil. Do not pulverize the soil in the process.

**Planting Roses**

Plant rose bushes as soon as possible after bringing them home. Cut off any injured or broken roots. Cut the canes back to 8 inches in length before planting. Dig a hole 15-18 inches deep and 15-18 inches in diameter in an area free of shrub and tree roots. Check drainage by filling
the hole with water. If the water remains in the hole for more than six hours, there is poor drainage. Dig deeper until the water drains. Remove or fracture restrictive layers, such as caliche, to allow drainage.

After 1 or 2 shovelfuls of soil have been replaced, sprinkle 1-2 cupfuls of a single or triple superphosphate or a high phosphate fertilizer 16-20 or 11-48 into the bottom of the hole. Continue filling the hole until the time when you place the rosebush in the hole and there are 6-8 inches from the top. Make a slight mound in the center. Place the crown of the root system on the mound and spread the roots around and down the sloping sides in their natural growing position. The crown should about 2 inches above the desired height to allow for settling during the first watering.

**Fertilize**

It is better to apply small amounts of fertilizer to roses often, rather than to give heavy applications once a year. Roses need nitrogen and phosphorus. Mohave County soils contain potash, so this does not need to be applied. Fertilize established plants several times during the season with 2 ounces (4 level or 2 heaping tablespoonfuls) per plant with a fertilizer material such as 10-10-0, or 10-20-0, or 16-20-0 or use commercial rose food of equal nutrient content. Put the first application on in the spring after pruning and cleaning the beds. Fertilize again when the new growth is 3-4 inches long. Add a third application six weeks later. For fall blossoms, fertilize the plants between the first and fifteenth of September.

Liquid rose fertilizers are now used by many rose growers. Spray the plant foliage. Simply follow the directions when using this type of fertilizer.

**Irrigation**

Proper irrigation is absolutely necessary to produce quality roses in the desert. Irrigate to the bottom of the root zone (about 18-24 inches deep) with each watering. Check irrigation depth by pushing a steel bar or a long screwdriver into the soil. Where it stops indicates how deep the
water penetrated. Deep, infrequent watering allows the air to return to the soil, encourages the roots to grow deeply, avoids root rot, and flushes away salts. Light, frequent watering causes shallow root growth which leads to water stress during the summer or windy periods.

A rose is a rose is a rose.... Why not try your hand at growing roses in the desert?

PLAN TO ATTEND: Kingman Area Master Gardeners will be hosting a **Rose Pruning Workshop** on **Saturday, February 2, 2008** from 10:00 AM to 12:00 NOON at the home of Carolyn Johnston, 440 Greenway Drive, Kingman (by the golf course).

For more information contact The University of Arizona Mohave County Cooperative Extension at 101 E. Beale Street, Suite A, Kingman or telephone 928-753-3788.

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