

# ROSE PLANTING MY WAY

By Walter LeMire  
The Canadian Rose Grower

Following planting direction is good, but is it the only way to treat your plants? Maybe they could get off to a better start with a few adjustments. I can say that with most suggestions and directions I've never seen or heard any all wrong, yet it's wise to think about what effect they will have on the rose plants and your ability to maintain the garden for the full 12 months of the year with ease. A few observations I've made over the years between bareroot and potted roses growing in my gardens has caused me to change my original thinking. Yesterday, if asked which is best, spring or fall transplanting, without hesitation my answer was fall. Why? Because so many good rosarians said so!

For many years the purist exclaim the down-fall of planting potted roses. They claimed the roots grow in tight circles, unable ever to find any other passage, the chance of survival without digging the plant up and pruning the roots hard, then replanting it in the fall, was very small. Yes, at first we agreed, then, by trial we found what many had given carte blanche to was not that factual, only when the rose plant was grown in a pot for an extended period of time did some of the supposed conditions appear.

The traditional fall planting of most plants has given way to hilling them in for the winter.

The practice of potting my roses before planting them in their permanent location came about many years ago, at the time our lot measured 36.7 x 89.6 feet with a 7 room house and large verandas on the north and west exposure, you could say space was a premium. Of course hybridizing – growing cuttings – grafting roses helped to use space very quickly, no railing was free to sit on, only roses in pots sat there, the lawn became green walkways, had it not been for the cement curbing it could have been in jeopardy, people were over-heard commenting “He cuts his lawn with barber shears”.

Start thinking! Potting mediums became very important – what worked in them sometimes created headaches, example: automatic watering systems can only work efficiently with uniformity through out the whole area, a soft spot in the rose bed will find frost – heaving the plants out of it's mooring in winter.

## FINE TUNE YOUR ROSE PLANTING

Take small steps. Starting with newly acquired miniature rose plants in 2.25 – 3inch pots they should always be repotted twice, we find the policy of a maximum of a 2 inch increase per to be the best, second repotting material should come from the area they will call home. Any pot that has dried out should never be transplanted for at least three weeks and only if it's growing robustly. Planting directions are the same as large roses.

Larger roses plants are treated this way, the roots are always pruned to fit in a 6 liter pot – smaller plants, we use 1 gallon pots. The tops are reduced to no more than 4 inches and

any crossing branches are removed. The soil to be used in the pots comes from the rose garden, the thinking is, if I can't grow robust roses in that medium then why would I want to plant anything there in the first place. You also keep soil uniformity.

We use liquid fertilizer at half the recommended strength, great care is taken to never allow our pots to dry out, after all, it's my responsibility and I can't blame anyone, even if it's hot. We hold them in pots for a good month or until the rose is growing with good vigor.

## PLANT THE POT!

It's time to plant the potted rose, by that we mean the rose in the pot. I find these following steps are very important. We should be attentive to the smallest detail, my soil is good and heavy, with years of fiber additions it's still heavy, holds moisture like a sponge. Most beds are raised, this ensures good drainage. "Note" My description is heavy, others have made comments such as "He grows roses in cement", that's OK, it's just the way I like it.

When planting the potted rose I bring with me some "gypsum" in the wheelbarrow, the soil of the hole is transferred to it so I can break up large clumps adding a cup of gypsum to the mix. The hole should be a little deeper than the pot for own-root roses, miniatures come under this heading. I think the depth for budded plants is very important as we get best results when the grafted area is slightly above bed level, because the rose is still potted, the desired level can be obtained by adding or removing soil. It's time to back fill around the potted rose, try to get the soil in close contact with the outside of the pot using your fingers and hands firming the soil as you fill in the hole. Keep your feet outside of the bed, it's meant for plants to grow in, not walkin.

## WATER POWER

The next step is very important. We now use the power of water to help fill in around the outside of the pot and form a perfect mold for our new rose plant. Three days later rotate the pot one third, once again it's time to water around the outside of the pot, we have not mentioned the pot itself because it's almost impossible for it not to get watered at the same time. The turning of the pot stops the roots from becoming anchored, this action does not harm them it stimulates them. The turning and watering ceremony is repeated every three days for about twenty one, it's alright to go longer if your turn the pot every three days.

Feed lightly. Yet, it's good to use a little liquid fertilizer just be certain to never forget the word "maximum" in the directions, less won't hurt, more could burn the tender roots.

## THE DAY HAS COME

Day twenty one it's time to transplant your rose plant into it's perfectly shaped mold, because the wet soil sticks to the inside of the pot we recommend leaving it stand overnight on top of the bed, this also gives you time to gaze into that mold, it's OK to smile and say "I think it's perfect the rose will love it". Time to put that baby into it's new home, turning the pot over and checking that all the roots can slide back thru the holes into the pot, with one hand supporting the plant press firmly with your thumb on the bottom, if the moisture is right the rose will ease out onto your supporting hand, should it still hold tight in the pot just leave it stand for a few more hours, don't worry it will pop out, carefully insert it into the hole, now time for a little water around the newly planted rose so the soil blends together and the roots can skip into their new surroundings. You now have made the replanting transition easier, your rose will reward you with good growth – beautiful flowers. Maybe some day I could hear you say "GIMME THE POT".