

Rejuvenate Your Potted Roses

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Do you grow some of your roses in pots, and have you recently noticed that they look sickly or do not perform as well as they used to? Is it difficult to keep your potted roses watered? Do you see roots growing out of the holes in the bottom of the pots? Do the pots feel very light? Have your roses been in these pots for three years or more? Would you like to grow roses that bloom prolifically, are healthy, and are easy to care for? If you answered yes to the above questions, then it's time to rejuvenate your potted roses.

Roses will become rootbound after about three years. Actually, they can become rootbound even much sooner if you are still growing them in pots that are too small for their maximum capacity. For example, hybrid teas can become rootbound in a 5-gallon pot in less than a year. And the minis can quickly become rootbound in a 1-gallon pot.

Another reason to repot your roses is if you had originally used wooden pots, which will rot after a few years. So if you see your pots starting to deteriorate, repot your roses before they fall apart completely. You may want to consider plastic pots which last the longest and stay the coolest (without freezing in winter). Wood pots dry out too fast.

Repotting roses can be done any time of year, however a little more care must be used if done during the heat of summer. Just make sure that the root system is not exposed to the sun for too long. For the novice, it may be advisable to wait until the weather cools somewhat, such as fall, winter, or spring, and avoid summer repotting.

Miniature roses are the simplest to repot since they are small and easy to handle. Minis perform the best if they are in at least a 7-gallon pot, so if your minis are in smaller pots you will want to take this opportunity to move them up to a larger pot.

Some of the smaller minis like 'American Rose Centennial', 'Rainbow's End', and any of the micro-minis can remain a long time in the 7-gallon pots before needing repotting. But the more vigorous minis such as 'Jean Kenneally', 'Irresistible', and 'Pucker Up' will need repotting more often. Their need for repotting will become evident when they cease to produce abundant blooms.

Large plants such as hybrid teas, shrubs, and old garden roses can be grown successfully in 15- to 25-gallon pots for a few years, but most of these bigger roses reach their highest potential if they are grown in the ground. However, some of the smaller floribundas, shrubs, and old garden roses can be grown in pots indefinitely. 'Purple Tiger', 'Showbiz', 'Souvenir de la Malmaison', 'Fair Bianca', and 'Rose de Rescht' stay relatively small plants and can thrive in pots for a long time.

On the other hand, I had been growing ‘Sheer Bliss’ and ‘Bride’s Dream’ in 25-gallon pots for about four years. These varieties are vigorous and can grow very big, however they had maxed-out in the pots and were starting to go downhill. When we built our new rose bed that year, we relocated these favorite roses to a permanent spot in the new bed. Amazingly, those two plants took off like gangbusters and rewarded me with a bounty of beautiful blooms on long stems. They were extremely happy in their new bed.

HERE’S HOW TO REPOT YOUR ROSES:

First, loosen the sides of the pot. The soil should be slightly moist, but not too wet. You should wear leather gloves, to prevent injury to your hands from thorns. Gently pull the rose out of the pot by pulling from the base of the main canes. This will be an easy task for the miniatures, but more muscle will be needed for repotting the larger and more mature plants, so you may require assistance in this endeavor. If you are moving the rose to a larger pot, just put a little soil in the bottom of the new pot, insert the plant, toss a couple tablespoons of superphosphate and fish meal around the edges, and then fill in the spaces with more potting soil. The superphosphate will encourage a good root system, and the organic fish meal will enhance the soil. If you want to use a soil polymer to conserve moisture, it should be mixed in with the potting soil before filling in the pot. You can also mix in some compost with the potting soil to give your roses a nutrient boost.

If the rose will be returning to the same size pot, especially in the case of a miniature that has already been in a 7-gallon pot for a few years, remove some of the root system from around the edges and the bottom of the plant with a sharp knife before returning it to the pot. Then fill in the side spaces with new potting soil as if you were moving the rose up to a larger pot. This will rejuvenate your minis.

Next, you should water the plant thoroughly with a solution of Vitamin B1 (1 TB) or *Superthrive* (1 drop) in a gallon of water. Keep the plants well watered for several weeks, and you might also want to locate the plants in a shady spot for about a week for extra protection from transplant shock.

You can also do a little light pruning on your rose plants immediately after they are repotted. If you wait until fall or winter to repot your roses, you can then prune as you would normally do at those times.

This might also be a good time to install an automatic drip watering system set up on a timer for your pots. Or if you already have a drip system, check each emitter to make sure they are working properly.

It is best to not fertilize your repotted roses for about 2 weeks (except for the fish meal and superphosphate at the bottom of the pot), until after they settle in and start to rebound. I like to start out with a light solution of fish emulsion mixed with *SuperThrive*, and apply this two weeks in a row. Then two weeks later you can continue your regular fertilizing and spraying schedule.

Your rejuvenated roses will reward you with renewed vigor and lots of blooms. You will be very pleased!

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