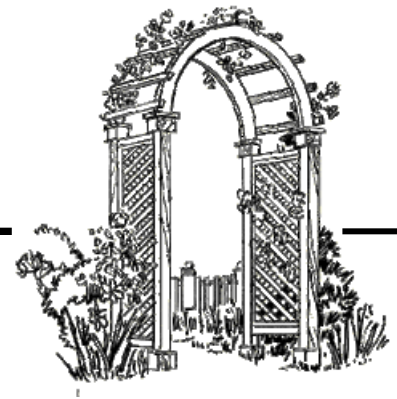


## Roses that reach for the sky

# Climbing Roses



Climbing roses are shrubs that produce long, relaxed canes. They do not climb the way most vines do, which is by twining or grasping with tendrils or holdfasts. When properly pruned, trained, and tied to a support such as a fence, trellis or arbor, they reach for the sky. There is a class of roses called “large flowered climbers,” and many other types of roses can be grown as climbers because of their growth habit.

Many climbing roses can grow to be quite large. If you’re pressed for space, try one of the many climbing forms of miniature roses. These only grow to be 6 to 12 feet tall and are perfect for a small arbor, trellis or fence.

## Recommended Varieties

The following roses grown as climbers do well in Kansas City and are given a high rating by the American Rose Society: Abraham Darby, Aloha, Altissimo, America, American Pillar, Angel Pink, Belinda, Cl. Cal Poly, City of York, Clair Matin, Compassion, Constance Spry, Don Juan, Dortmund, Dublin Bay, Fourth of July, Galway Bay, Henry Kelsey, Hi Ho, Hurdy Gurdy, Cl. Iceberg, Jeanne LaJoie, John Cabot, John Davis, New Dawn, Night Owl, Parade, Pierre de Ronsard, Cl. Rainbow’s End, Rhonda, Cl. Rise ‘n’ Shine, Rosarium Uetersen, Silver Moon, Soaring Spirits, Westerland, William Baffin, and Zephrine Drouhin. (Cl. indicates the climbing form of a shrub rose.)

## Planting

Just like their smaller growing cousins, climbing roses are best planted in early spring. And like other roses, plant climbers in a location where they will receive at least six hours of sun each day and have room to spread over a sturdy support. Before planting, improve the soil by adding compost into entire bed area 6 to 8 inches deep, and adjust the soil pH toward the ideal of 6.0 to 6.5.

## Training

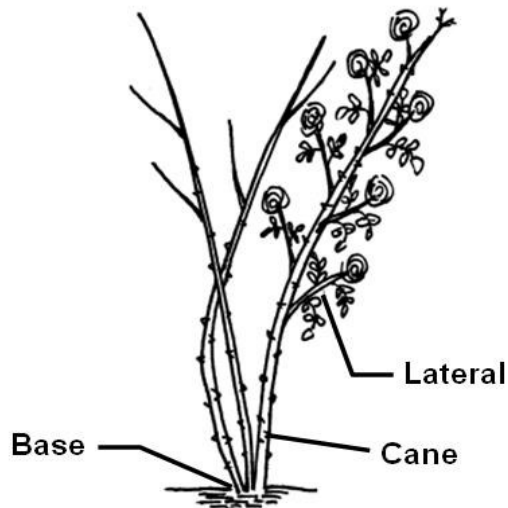
If possible, install the support structure before planting your climbing rose.

**First year.** The first year, let the climber grow upward and make no attempt at training. As the canes grow, tie them loosely to the support with strips of stretchy material at 15-inch intervals. Allow at least 4 to 6 inches of “give” to the ties so air can circulate behind the canes.

**Second year.** The second year, start training the main canes to a horizontal position to encourage production of side shoots, called laterals, off the main canes. Roses produce more flowers when the main canes grow horizontally. Select the sturdiest canes and tie them loosely as before. Space the canes evenly and as close to horizontal as possible.

## Care

Climbing roses require the same basic care as other rose varieties: regular fertilization and watering, good air circulation, and protection from a wide variety of pests and diseases. The main difference between the care of climbers and other roses is in pruning and protecting them over the winter.



## Pruning

When it comes to pruning, think of climbers in two groups: once-bloomers and repeat-bloomers. The first step to pruning a rose correctly is to know which group your rose is in.

Once-bloomers produce a single flush of flowers in early summer on canes that are at least one year old. Prune these climbers after they flower.

1. Remove the oldest canes, keeping four or five of the most vigorous, younger canes.
2. Along the canes you will find side branches called laterals which will produce the flowers. Cut each lateral back to four or five sets of leaves. This tidies the plant and encourages another set of flowers the next year.

Repeat-bloomers produce flowers throughout the season, also on canes that are at least one year old. Prune these climbers in early spring, around mid-April.

1. Remove the oldest canes and the weakest new canes, retaining three or four of the most vigorous, younger canes and tying them to supports.
2. Cut back flowering laterals to four leaf buds per shoot.

### General maintenance pruning for both groups

In addition to the guidelines above, be sure to perform general maintenance pruning each year. This includes removing:

- Dead, damaged or diseased canes
- Canes that cross
- Canes that grow in toward the center of the shrub
- Suckers that grow from below the graft union on grafted plants

## Winter Protection

- There are two strategies for getting your climbers through the winter.
- Buy hardy varieties, recommended for USDA zone 6a.  
Tender roses will need winter protection. Remove the canes from their supports, lay them on the ground, peg them in place with stakes, and cover them with 12 inches of soil or leaves. Climbers can be left on their support and wrapped in burlap stuffed with straw.

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