MINIATURE ROSES

Most people who have never grown a miniature rose in the garden would probably think of miniature roses as tiny plants growing in a sunny window or under grow lights in the house. This myth is easy to understand because mini roses are often promoted by local nursery outlets and grocery stores as little potted plants they sell in full bloom displayed inside the stores. Many of these roses are of little value in the garden and they should be enjoyed through their blooming life and then disposed of. In fact, the only thing miniature about most miniature roses are the flowers. If given a minimum amount of care, many miniature roses will attain a height of 2-3 feet and will produce hundreds of blooms in a rainbow of colors. There are varieties of miniature roses which do grow only 6-8 inches tall, but there are also miniature roses which climb and may reach a height of 10 feet or more. In addition to being excellent garden plants, many miniature roses can also make excellent potted plants. When planted in a container 10-12 inches in diameter and 8 or more inches deep, they will thrive on the patio or in a window box. There are also trailing miniature roses that make excellent hanging basket plants. For pots or baskets, just plant them using a good potting soil, fertilize regularly and water as needed to produce a summer full of flowers.

PLANTING: Site selection is important for optimum growth and bloom production for any miniature rose. Miniatures will do best if they receive 6 or more hours of sunlight per day. If the only site available receives less than 6 hours of sunlight, the number of flowers and overall vigor of the plants will be reduced, but they will still grow. Most miniature roses are available as potted plants and therefore can be purchased and planted at almost any time of the year. Prepare a planting site 8-10 inches in diameter and 12 inches deep by removing the soil and mixing (up to 1/3 by volume) of organic material with it. The organic material can be peat moss, manure, or various composts. To further enhance the growth of the new plant, also add about 1/3 by volume a soil lightening material such as perlite or sand. These will allow for better drainage and will promote better root growth. Remove the plant from the pot by turning the pot upside down and gently pulling on it. Then place the plant in a hole made in the prepared area. Plant the rose at the same depth or slightly lower than it was in the pot. Firm the soil around the root ball and water well so that the plant is firmly settled into the ground.

WATERING: All roses require adequate water to bloom their best. It is especially important to water newly planted miniature roses frequently. Water the plants well, at least 2-3 times per week for the first 6-8 weeks. After the plant has become well established, water as needed. That may be once a week, or more often if the weather is hot and dry. Never allow the soil around your miniature roses to become completely dry.

FERTILIZING: Providing adequate nutrients will allow miniature roses to grow vigorously and produce many blooms. A light sprinkling of a balanced fertilizer, (a general all purpose fertilizer labeled for flowering plants, like that sold by the Portland Rose Society), about two tablespoons per plant, three times a year, once in mid April then in mid June and finally in late July, will be adequate. After fertilizing, water the roses so that the fertilizer will dissolve and move into the root zone where it can be absorbed by the plant. Liquid fertilizers, those that are dissolved in or diluted with water can be applied from a hose end sprayer or mixed in a bucket and poured on the plants are also adequate but will need to be applied more frequently, usually at about 3 week intervals.

PRUNING: Some miniature roses will set hips, (grow seeds) after they bloom. Hip production causes a hormone change in the plant that will slow down flower production. Therefore, it may be necessary to remove the dead flowers to keep the plants blooming freely. How much stem should be removed with the old flower? The primary object in all pruning is to have the remaining stem be strong enough to support the new blooms. These new blooms will be produced from stems that grow from just below the pruning point. When pruning large roses the rule of thumb is to cut to the first five leaflet leaf, which usually achieves the objective. With minis, there often are no five leaflet leaves. Therefore, cut the stem about halfway back and then observe the resulting new growth cycle. With a little

practice you will quickly learn how to prune to get the results you want.

In February or March minis will also need what is called the spring pruning. Reduce the overall size of the bush to 6 to 8 inches high and remove all the tiny twiggy growth coming from the larger canes or from the ground. They can even be cut lower forcing all the new growth to come from the bottom of the plant if desired. Minis are very vigorous and even a severe pruning will not hurt them. At any time during the year, miniature roses can be shaped to keep them looking the way you want without causing much loss in flower numbers. Miniature roses are very vigorous and will rebound very quickly from any pruning that you do to them.

PROBLEMS: Miniature roses are susceptible to the same problems as all other roses which include a few insects and some disease problems, all of which can be easily controlled.

Aphids are the most significant insect problem, but they can be controlled by almost any insecticide. They can also be controlled by literally blasting them off the bushes with a fine hard spray from the hose. A few may find their way back onto the bush but most will not.

Blackspot is a disease that can be a problem during damp weather. Blackspot is recognizable by leaves which turn yellow and have one or more black spots, which are usually round in shape. Such diseased leaves should be removed and disposed of in the trash. At the same time a preventative fungicidal spray such as Ortho's Rose Fungicide or Ortho's Garden Fungicide should be applied. For control of black spot it will be necessary to repeat spraying with a fungicide at 7-14 day intervals during the damp weather portions of the growing season. When the weather becomes warm and dry Blackspot usually ceases to be a problem.

Powdery Mildew is a disease with a very descriptive name. A white powdery covering forms on the uppermost leaves, stems and buds which also causes leaf distortion at the same time. This disease is promoted by warm dry days followed by nights which are cool enough for dew to form on the bushes. These weather conditions most often occur in late spring to early summer and again in the early fall. Mildew can be difficult to control. Ortho's Rose Fungicide will help to control this fungus but sometimes does not seem to be very effective. The fungicide Immunox by Spectricide seems to be much more effective in treating mildew. But since mildew is a fungus that grows on the new foliage, the bushes need somewhat frequent sprayings to protect the newly produced leaves. For a nonchemical approach, good results have been obtained by hosing down the bushes with water in the late afternoon as the fungus spores are killed by liquid water on the leaves, or by using the organic product Erase.

Spider Mites are a problem often encountered by mini rose growers. Two spotted spider mites, often referred to as "red spider", are extremely tiny organisms which thrive during the hottest part of the summer. Their feeding causes damage to the foliage of the rose which turns a bronzy color and then falls off. The presence of mites is most easily noted by a fine layer of webs on and between the leaves of the rose, especially the lower leaves. Control can be obtained by using a miticide such as Avid, or by using one of the combination spray products which contain a miticide such as Vendex or Kelthane. Reasonable control can be obtained by spraying the leaves with a fine hard water spray every two to three days. This disrupts the mites reproductive cycle and thus reduces their numbers.

WHICH MINI ROSES SHOULD YOU GET: Since there is such a large variety of minis available it is necessary to decide how you want to use them and then pick appropriate varieties. The Portland Rose Society has a number of mini's on the list of recommended roses for the Portland area but the final selection will be up to you. Another way to start is to obtain the catalogs from a number of different providers and read about all the different types that are available.

SOURCES: The Portland area currently has two miniature rose sources. Oregon Miniature Roses at 18648 99E NE, Hubbard, OR, 503-981-2733 will provide a bounty of different miniature roses. Also Heirloom Roses in St. Paul, OR 503-538-1576 is currently listing hundreds of miniatures roses. The offerings of these and other nurseries will widen your horizons concerning the many possibilities for using miniature roses in your landscape. Visiting them and seeing the hundreds of varieties of miniature roses in bloom is even better. There are many other miniature rose sources around the country and the PRS maintains a list which includes most of them.

For additional information contact:

The Portland Rose Society, phone 503-777-4311, or www.PortlandRoseSociety.org

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