



Columbia Nursery

Winter Rose Care Guide for the Flathead Valley

At Columbia Nursery, we believe roses can thrive in the Flathead Valley with proper care and winter preparation. Different types of roses have different levels of hardiness, ranging from the tough shrub roses to the more delicate hybrid teas. Understanding the specific needs of each type will help ensure healthy growth and beautiful blooms year after year.

Types of Roses and Winter Protection Needs

Shrub Roses (Rugosa & Hardy Shrub Roses): These are typically grown on their own roots, making them more resilient. In most cases, they do not require winter protection in our area.

English Shrub Roses: These are usually grafted but use hardier rootstock. They benefit from winter protection, though they are more cold-tolerant than hybrid teas.

Hybrid Teas, Grandifloras, and Floribundas: These are the most sensitive to cold and require extra care. We recommend winter protection throughout the valley, especially below Zone 4.

Why Protect Roses in Winter?

Montana winters often bring rapid and extreme temperature changes that roses cannot tolerate well. The goal of winterizing is to keep roses consistently frozen, minimizing freeze-thaw cycles that damage plants. Protection also helps prevent drying out from harsh winds.

How to Protect Your Roses

- Wait until after a few hard frosts but before the end of October to start.
- For Hybrid Teas: Trim canes to 18–20 inches tall. Remove all remaining leaves and flowers. Clean the ground around the rose.
- Mound at least 8 inches of compost or soil from another location over the base to cover the graft. Compost is preferred as it enriches the soil for spring.
- Do not use leaves or straw alone, as these do not provide sufficient protection in Montana.
- Apply anti-transpirants like Wilt-Pruf® on calm days when temperatures are above 40°F. This helps prevent drying from winter winds.
- Tie canes into a bundle with twine. Cover with burlap or breathable fabric (never plastic) and secure the bottom with soil.
- Optional: Use vented styrofoam rose cones secured with landscape stakes.

Special Considerations

English Shrub Roses & Climbers: Follow the same process, but you can leave canes longer and tie them gently down. Wrapping with burlap is optional unless the site is windy. Expect some cane dieback requiring pruning in spring.

Miniature Roses: Simply mulch over the entire plant so no canes remain exposed.



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When to Remove Winter Protection

Timing for removing winter protection varies each year. Most roses are uncovered between mid-April and the end of April, with all protection removed by May 1st. Watch for late frosts and sudden cold snaps in spring and adjust accordingly.

For more information, visit Columbia Nursery or give us a call. We are happy to help with your rose care questions!