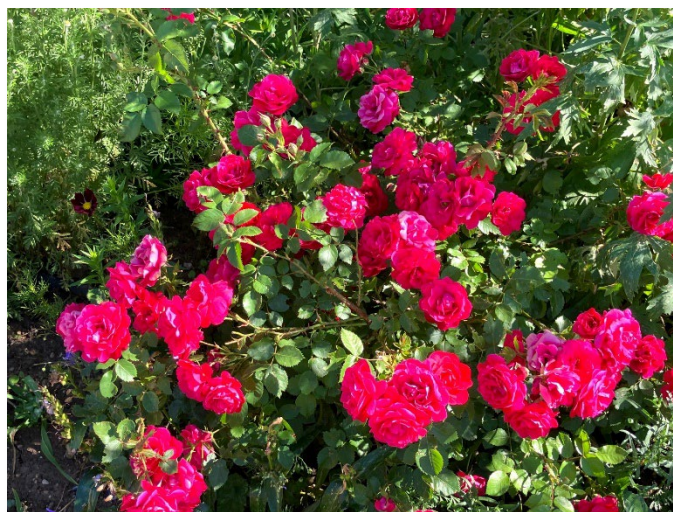


Growing roses in Laramie, Wyoming

Helen Coates, UW Extension Master Gardener

It is possible to have beautiful roses in Laramie. There are many varieties that thrive here. However, choosing roses adapted to our climate zone is very important. Many roses familiar to people who move to the Laramie area were hybridized in Europe and southern climates where the winter temperature **does not** go below 20F. Laramie is 7,220 ft in elevation and has a continental type climate (warm summers, COLD winters). Laramie is generally considered a USDA zone 4 with maximum lows of MINUS 30 to MINUS 20F. The other considerations for gardeners are the dramatic temperature swings in spring and fall which stress plants and our extreme drying winds. In a well sheltered spot it is possible to grow zone 4 roses but for open spaces roses rated zone 3 and 2 perform more reliably. It is also best to buy plants growing on their own roots (not grafted onto rootstock). The graft union is subject to winter kill.



Watering

After cold hardiness, the next most important consideration for growing roses in Laramie is water. Laramie gets 5-12" of rain a year. This is very little as far as gardening is concerned, for example Madison WI gets 37 inches a year. There are some very hardy shrub roses, particularly *Rosa glauca*, that will survive on minimal watering but in general roses do better with consistent moisture. Therefore, when planning a rose garden some form of irrigation (drip system, soaker hoses) is needed.

Soil

The old species and shrub roses can survive in the less than fertile soils of Laramie, but is better if planning a rose garden, to significantly amend the soil with lots of organic compost and fertilizer for healthy plants and abundant beautiful blooms. After the plants start growing in late May applying fertilizer every 2 weeks will bring the best results for hybrid roses. Species and old types and Rugosa roses do not need as much fertilizer.

A fertilizer created specifically for roses can be useful – a typical one is 18N-24P-16K. Higher nitrogen fertilizers may result in excess leaves and fewer flowers. Stop fertilizing in early August so as not to promote the growth of soft new tissue that will be subject to winter kill.

Planting

Planting is best done in the spring so that the roses can become established in our short growing season. It is important to choose a site with at least 6 hours of sun a day. As mentioned previously, grafted roses are NOT recommended. Remove any sawdust, wood chips or other packing material before planting. Plant the crown of the rose about 3" below normal soil level after amending the soil and digging a wide enough hole for the roots to be spread out. Water well after planting.

Pruning

Old type shrub roses only need a little pruning of dead canes. They may also need shaping as they can grow into dense thickets. Wait to prune roses until late spring. In May when the roses show green bud growth it is easier to see where winter kill has pruned the rose. Cut back the dead stems to just less than ½ inch above the first green bud. Cuts are best done at a 45-degree angle sloping away from the bud.

Diseases and insects

The rugosa and species roses are naturally resistant to black spot and powdery mildew. The Canadian roses are bred for disease resistance and have few problems. Ground watering rather than overhead watering will help prevent mildew. Japanese beetle, so far, finds it too cold in Laramie. Leaf cutter bees do make circular and oval cut outs in rose leaves. They use these pieces to build their nests. In this way rose growers are contributing to beneficial insect life. If undesired, Neem might deter them.

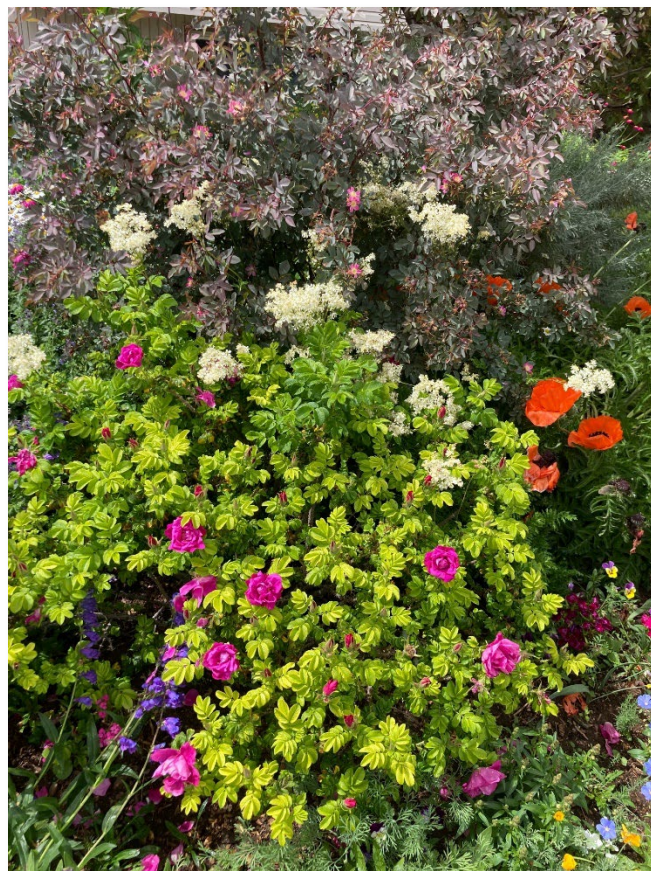
Winter survival

Zone 3 roses survive the best in our area. Snow can provide an insulating blanket for rose crowns, where they can wait out the harshest weather. A good layer of mulch placed around the crown in fall (removed in the spring) may help protect them.

Garden Use

The larger shrub and species old roses are best planted along a fence or in the background as an accent as they can grow very large. Some of the rugosa roses have bright light green textured foliage and *Rosa rubrifolia* has natural dark maroon foliage. Both can be used as contrasting texture and color in the garden. See the picture to the right with Rugosa rose 'Moje Hammarberg' at the bottom and *Rosa rubrifolia* above it.

Roses can be grown in a dedicated rose garden or mixed with other perennials and annuals.



Rose Choices and availability

Hardy roses can be bought at local garden centers or online at specialty rose centers which stock hardy roses. Gardeners should be careful when purchasing roses at large box stores as some of these tend to stock varieties unsuited for Laramie's climate.

Old species roses can be seen in glorious bloom all over Laramie in June. Mostly 'Harison's Yellow', 'Persian Yellow' and 'Austrian Copper'. All are rated USDA Zone 2-3 and are disease and drought tolerant. Unfortunately, they usually only have one wave of blooms in the spring.

Redleaf rose has small pink blossoms in June but has great dark foliage, impressive red hips, and orange fall foliage, in addition to being very drought tolerant.

Some good roses for our area are classified as "old garden roses" ('Ispahan' and others). Many hybrid rugosa roses are available and are naturally disease resistant and hardy. In addition, they have large amounts of thorns so are generally avoided by deer. Many are very strongly scented. A nice shrub rose is 'Thérèse Bugnet'. Rated USDA Zone 2, it has sweetly scented double repeating pink blooms and grows 5-6 feet tall.

There are a LARGE number of Canadian bred roses available. They are generally bred for zone 3 or lower and have great disease resistance. They can resemble familiar hybrid teas but will survive well in Laramie. Most are repeat bloomers and some are climbing roses. Many are outstanding such as 'Jens Munk' and 'William Baffin', but there are so many it is hard to choose. All of these roses are grown on their own roots.



Old species rose, *Rosa foetida* var. 'bicolor', 'Austrian Copper'



'Thérèse Bugnet'



'George Vancouver' Canadian rose, USDA Zone 3