

Bell County Master Gardeners
Tip of the Week
By Gary Slanga
“Earthkind Roses, Part 3”

This is the third and last article on the Texas A&M EarthKind™ concept and EarthKind™ roses in particular. Plants that receive the EarthKind™ designation need minimal watering and no chemicals or fertilizers.

The only requirement to produce great EarthKind™ roses is the proper selection and preparation of the planting site. Roses do best if they receive at least eight hours of sun daily, so choose the planting site carefully. To prepare a site it is recommended that some organic compost be added to the native soil where the rose will be planted.

Central Texas soil is not usually the best, but please use the native soil from your planting site since the rose must adapt to that soil type. If you have a heavy clay soil, add sand or expanded shale to help loosen up and aerate the soil.

When planting multiple Earthkind roses, allow up to eight feet between plants as these are bush roses and they can get quite large. If space is limited, pruning will keep the rose in its designated space and also improve air circulation.

After planting, mulch the rose with 3-4 inches of organic mulch. Hardwood mulch from shredded tree trimmings works the best. This mulch deteriorates rapidly and becomes the fertilizer that the rose will use, so replenish the mulch every year or two. Hardwood mulch also will not “float “ away in the rains.

Water as necessary to get the rose established. After the plant is established, you should water thoroughly only when needed during hot, dry periods. When watering, water only at the base of the plant to keep leaves dry to help prevent disease. Consider using drip irrigation or a soaker hose under the mulch to water automatically and reduce work. You can find EarthKind™ roses at nurseries in the area or at the Bell County Master Gardeners Plant Sale on the 26th of March. Look for the Earthkind tag on each rose.

Have any questions about gardening in Central Texas? Contact ask.bcmga@gmail.com