



Caring for Knock Out Roses

Botanical Name: *Rosa Radrazz*

Common Name: Knock Out Rose

Bloom Time: Spring through Fall

Hardiness Zones: USDA Zones 4 to 9

Knock Out roses are popular because they're one of the longest blooming, lowest-maintenance, most pest- and disease-resistant roses out there. Knock Out roses are even resistant to black spot disease, the scourge of rose growers. If you've ever had a rose bush die on you — and who hasn't? — black spot was probably the culprit.

Roses are notoriously difficult to grow. They're garden divas that require pruning, spraying, feeding and constant attention. But Knock Outs have put roses within the skill set of most gardeners. You don't even have to deadhead the things; they just drop their own flowers and keep on blooming.

Planting Knock Out Roses: Plant Knock Outs in spring or fall. They'll have less risk of transplant shock when the temps are mild. Pick a spot where your Knock Out roses will get 6 to 8 hours of sun per day. They can tolerate some shade but they bloom best in full sun. Space them at least 3 feet apart. This makes room for them to reach their mature size and still have good air circulation, which is key to disease prevention.

Caring for Knock Out Roses: Low maintenance doesn't mean *no* maintenance. Here's how to keep your Knock Outs looking knock-out gorgeous. Knock Outs do best in neutral soil with a pH between 5.5 and 6.5. You can amend your soil to raise or lower the pH as needed. There are at-home soil pH testing kits available, or your local extension office should be able to analyze a soil sample for you. Water regularly during the summer growing season. How much water you give your rose depends on where you live and how much rainfall you get. They're not thirsty plants and are drought tolerant, but they still need a couple of gallons of water a week during the growing season. Fertilize them monthly or bi-monthly during the growing season. Use a balanced rose food. Stop fertilizing in late summer so the plant will put its energy into its roots to get ready for winter. Prune your roses in late winter/early spring, when new shoots emerge from the canes. Do a hard trim, removing 2/3 of the shrub, every two or three years. You don't need to deadhead them as Knock Outs bloom even if you don't trim off the spent blooms, so they're the lazy gardener's friend. Deadheading makes them look tidier, though.

Pests and Diseases: Knock Out roses are famously resistant to bugs and rose diseases. But they are susceptible to rose rosette, a virus spread by eriophyid mites that blow in on the wind. The tiny mites eat a rose, give the plant the virus, and boom, your Knock Out is sick. Once infected, your formerly healthy rose will begin producing bunches of bright red new shoots that look, well, weird. Those shoots bloom, but the roses are distorted. As the rose rosette virus spreads through the plant, the plant slowly dies back until it completely dies. Like all plant viruses, rose rosette is tough to control because it spreads internally to every part of the plant. Pruning off those bright red shoots as soon as they appear, being sure to cut through the healthy green wood below, may save the rose. But once the entire plant gets full-blown rose rosette, the plant is finished. Spraying won't work. Pull the plant out by the roots, bag it up, and throw it in the trash (not the composter!) so it won't infect surrounding plants. They can also get Japanese beetles and rose slugs (also called sawfly) but the roses are so tough that even if bugs munch on their leaves, they'll survive.