

QA1053

I am in the process of starting a new rose garden in black clay soil, after gardening in the sandy loam soils of North East Texas for twenty years. What should be done and how to grow roses in this area? - M. S. R.

I can surely understand what you are indicating about the differences in the soils between your former and current home. Judy and I lived in Tyler for seven years and it seemed almost as if you stuck a stick in the ground it would grow. A great gardening area!

The news is “good” in your current situation. The best group of products to use for soil improvement is finished plant derived compost and expanded shale. The correct use of these two products will create an Earth Kind soil. An Earth Kind improved soil will provide desirable conditions for success. Kind Roses are not sprayed ... with anything, they are not pruned, no dead heading is needed, no fertilizer of any type is used and a minimum of water is utilized. Earth Kind roses require three cultural items to be successful. The requirements are:

- Full sun for a minimum of eight hours and day long full sun is preferred
- Good air movement
- Well drained soil

In your native clay soil till in 3” of expanded shale along with 3” of finished plant derived compost, crown the bed and you are ready to plant Earth Kind Roses. For more information on Earth Kind Roses visit the Texas Cooperative Extension site, click on visit a County office, and then click Dallas County and Horticulture. You will find a list of Earth Kind Roses and additional tips at this site.

After completing your planting add 3 - 4" of bark mulch or shredded tree trimmings to the entire bed. Utilize drip irrigation with your planting and water usage is at an absolute minimum. These recommendations will improve the drainage, nutrition, moisture and aeration so important to healthy rose growth.

Good Luck and have fun with your new Earth Kind rose planting!

March 3, 4 and 5 Texas Cooperative Extension and the Master Gardeners are scheduled to conduct a three-day Conservation Series School including Earth Kind Roses at the event, There is no charge to attend the Conservation Series School. The School series is in conjunction with the Spring Dallas Home & Garden Show.

Could you give me any suggestions for some flowers I might grow between our driveway and house? It gets full sun and even my marigolds won't grow there because of the heat. Thank you. - M. H.

I suggest three of the best groups for the situation you have described are - annual vinca or periwinkle, copper plant and lantana. To better insure their and others survival and performance there are a few suggestions I have for you.

1. Improve the soil. Make sure the entire bed has plenty of organic matter. I would like to have the soil mix be 50% organic matter and 50% soil to a depth of 6" minimum and 12" if possible.
2. After planting and watering maintain soil moisture to help get them off to a good start.
3. Mulch all the plants with 3-4" of pine or your favorite bark mulch. Do this around each plant and all the spaces between. Cover all bare soil.
4. Purchase and set up an inexpensive drip irrigation system. This will provide the much-needed moisture to a location, which requires special attention.

By following my suggestions you should get better results this season. Give it a try!

The time to install warm season annuals and tender perennials is after the last average killing frost/freeze date for your area. If you are not familiar with this date contact your County's office of Texas Cooperative Extension which is often called the County Agent's office or a local nursery. Both sources will be able to provide you or anyone with this important date.

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