



Mound your roses

Keeping rosebushes uniformly cold all winter prevents the damaging effects of alternate freezing and thawing on the plants' graft unions — the part that's most susceptible to such damage.

One common method of keeping roses cold is to mound a well-drained soil/compost mix around and over the plant to a depth of several inches. Be sure that the material is well drained; materials that hold moisture can damage the plant.

The soil used to mound plants should be brought in from outside the garden. Scraping up the soil around a rose can cause root injury and lessen the plant's chance for survival.

After the soil mound has frozen, cover both mound and plant with 10 or 12 inches of evergreen boughs, woodchips or straw to help insulate the mound and keep the soil frozen.

Another option is to use commercially available Styrofoam rose cones. Such cones need to be well ventilated to prevent heat build-up during sunny winter days. Cut four or five 1-inch holes around both the top and bottom of the cone. These holes will aid in ventilation and keep the air inside the cone from heating up, causing the rose to break dormancy early. Old-fashioned bushel baskets are better than plastic rose cones, but very hard to come by.

For more tips on growing roses, request the fact sheet, "Growing Shrub Roses in Montana" (publication MT199603-AG) at your county or tribal MSU Extension office, or download it for free at <http://www.montana.edu/publications>.

More seasonal tips and suggestions are available at Dr. Bob's Web site, <http://gardenguide.montana.edu>