

# Transplanting Rose Bushes

**By Barbara A. Martinez**  
**Consulting Rosarian**

Several years ago, I transplanted a highly prized Graham Thomas rose bush to a great location where it would have more space. Not knowing anything about transplanting, I moved it in May when it was covered in rich, green, healthy foliage. Soon after transplanting this rose, it died.

The most important thing to know about transplanting roses is to do it when the bush is dormant. Roses will start better in a new location without shock while it is dormant. Accordingly, late January and February are the best times to transplant a rose. Here are some other tips that will help ensure a successful transplant:

- Transplant when the weather is cool, cloudy, and humid rather than dry and sunny. These conditions will conserve moisture in the rose bush, preventing loss of moisture through the leaves.
- Soak the ground around the roses to be moved so that you can dig deeply, get more roots and leave a ball of soil around the roots ("root ball"). If your rose bush isn't performing well, you may want to wash away the soil to inspect the roots and transplant it as a bare root plant. If the roots are diseased, throw it away.
- Prepare the new planting hole before you dig up the rose you are moving. In this way the rose's roots won't dry out as you prepare the new soil. Make it wider and deeper and remove rocks and roots as you dig. Dig the hole at least 6 inches larger than the root ball you are transplanting to be sure the roots will spread without touching the edges of the hole or without bending up at the edges. Mix in compost and peat moss to enrich the subsoil you dig up or replace it with good rich topsoil or compost. Water the new hole well.
- If you are unable to transplant the roses immediately after you dig them up, keep the roots moist during transplanting by keeping them covered with a wet sack or soak the roots in a pail of water.
- If you are transplanting in February, then you can prune the shrub after transplanting to compensate for loss of roots. Otherwise, wait until the next regular pruning time.

- Transplanting fertilizer solutions aid recovery. But don't overdo it. A large dose of fertilizer can easily burn a new transplant.
- Feed lightly the first season. Plants suffering from moving-shock need light meals until new feeding roots grow and get hungry.
- Water, water and WATER! Keep soil moist but not soggy all summer, and sprinkle the foliage early in the day at first. Lots of mulch the first year will conserve water and prevents weeds.

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