

Brief Overview of the Information Below.

1. Leave hips on rose for 4-6 months to collect in September. An alternative is to collect the hips when they are orange and slightly soft.
2. Cut open the hip and remove the seeds (achenes).
3. Clean the seeds thoroughly with either 1:1 water:peroxide or an anti-fungal. Be sure to remove all trace of the hips from the seeds to help prevent fungal attack.
4. Do a float test. Place seeds in water and discard the floaters.
5. Refrigerate the seeds for 4-6 weeks on a moist towel in a ziplock bag, or until small roots start to appear.
6. plant the rooting seedlings 0.25 inches deep in a sterile mixture and keep at room temp while the growth starts.
7. Discard any seedling that succumbs to powdery mildew.
8. Do not over-water the seedling and make sure the planting mix is sterile to help prevent damping-off, a disease in which the stem rots at the soil surface.

Harvesting the Hips

When the hips are ripe, after about four months, cut them off the bush. Some hips will turn yellow, orange, or red, but others stay green even when they are ripe. You can open the hips as soon as harvested or you can store the unopened hips in the refrigerator for several weeks before opening. Then slice the hips in half, and open them with a knife. A butter knife will do just fine. Now, dig the seeds out of the hip with the knife, and throw away the pulp and outer shell.

Soak the seeds

As soon as the seeds have been removed from the hips, rinse the seeds in a solution of purified water (any bottled water will do) with 5% bleach. This would be about two teaspoons of bleach per cup of water. Rinse the seeds with plain bottled water in a strainer, then soak the seeds in straight 3% peroxide for 24 hours. CAUTION: Do not mix bleach with peroxide because there could be a chemical reaction.

The Water Float Test

Some people don't bother to take the time to do this, but others do. While the seeds are soaking, you will see that some sink to the bottom and some float on the top. The seeds that float are sometimes not viable, so you might want to throw them away. The seeds that sink are said to be the good ones, and are the ones to plant. There are pros and cons to this theory, and many hybridizers simply plant all the seeds that are harvested.

Clean the Seeds

A gentle way to clean the seeds is to use a Cuisinart or other brand of blender with a dough blending attachment, which is made of plastic and does not have sharp blades. You can blend the seeds using this gentle dough attachment for several minutes without any damage to the seeds. Do not use a blender with sharp metal blades as damage to the seeds may occur.

After the seeds have soaked overnight, rinse them in a strainer and place them into the blender with at least a cup of plain purified water (making sure all seeds are covered), and turn it on for a few minutes. It usually doesn't chop up the seeds, but rather, it will clean off the pulp remaining from the hip, which would otherwise mold if left on the seed. You may see a few seeds chopped up, but those usually aren't viable anyway. Flush the seeds again through a strainer using fresh purified water.

An alternate way to clean the seeds is to spread the seeds out on a clean cloth towel and scrub them with a brush to remove all pulp around each seed. However, this can be a lot of work, and the blender method is much easier and quicker.

To Stratify or Not to Stratify

Some hybridizers chill their seeds in the refrigerator for about six to ten weeks before planting, to encourage the seeds to germinate better. This is called stratification. If you keep the seeds in the refrigerator too long, they might begin sprouting before you plant them.

One way to stratify the seeds is to place the cleaned seeds on a paper towel (a heavyweight brand such as Bounty). Then moisten the paper towel with a solution of half & half purified water and peroxide (to help prevent mold). Fold the paper towel closed, encasing all the seeds in the moistened paper towel. Then place the towel full of seeds into a plastic zippered bag. Mark the seed variety and date on the outside of the plastic bag with a permanent marker, and then place the bag into the refrigerator set at about 34-38 degrees. Never freeze the seeds, and do not let them dry out. The moistened paper towel should remain moist in the closed plastic bag for many weeks.

Another way to stratify the seeds is to plant the cleaned seeds directly into a tray of potting soil (see below) and refrigerate the entire tray or pot of seeds. If refrigerating the tray for several weeks, it's best to enclose the tray in plastic to keep the soil moist.

When and How To Plant

The seeds can be planted right away if you have harvested them as late as November, December or January (in Southern California) or early spring after danger of frosts in your area. Place the seeds about one-half inch deep in a very light mixture of 50% sterile potting soil and 50% vermiculite. Some hybridizers use Sunshine Mix #4. You can use small pots or shallow trays to plant your seeds, whatever works for the space you have, as long as they have good drainage. Nursery flats work well for this. Lightly dust the seeds with RooTone or Captan before covering with soil. And then dust the top of the soil again, which will hopefully help to prevent damp-off (a disease which kills young seedlings). Amateur hybridizers concerned with toxic chemicals may want to periodically spray the seed tray with diluted peroxide and water instead of the more toxic Captan.

Water the planted seeds well and place them outside in direct sunlight (no need for Grow Lights). If there is still danger of frost, then you will

need to place the seed trays in a protected location such as under a tree or patio. You will need to keep the seed trays watered and don't let them dry out. After about six weeks, or when the weather starts to warm up, the little rose seedlings will start to sprout. They will continue to sprout as long as the weather is cool, but will stop sprouting when it gets too hot.

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Take the red rose hips off the rose when they are fully red and ripe. Or you can wait until they start to wrinkle and dry out just a bit. The point is that we don't want to let the seeds dry out on the rose (and die) if we let the rose hip wrinkle and dry right up.

The seed can be removed from the hip and sown immediately. Try to remove any chaff or debris from the seed hip just to keep things clean and sanitary but there's no real need to soak the seed or treat it in any way.

Once you have the seed, there are two simple systems for growing roses from seed.

The first is to put a handful of barely-damp vermiculite into a baggie. The vermiculite should not be sopping but not dry either. Write the name of the rose and today's date on a label (I can recommend regular pencil on bits of plastic cut from a yogurt tub) and insert it into the baggie. Put the seed into the baggie. Put the baggie into the refrigerator crisper. Mark a date 90 days later on the calendar.

Ninety (90) days after sowing, take the baggie out of the refrigerator and sow the seed into a flat. You can use pots and sow the seed so it is an inch apart if you don't have the space for flats. Label each pot or flat. You'll start seeing germination in a week and it will continue for upwards of a month.

Transplant the seedlings into their own flower pots when they have 4-6 true leaves and grow on until they are ready to be transplanted outdoors. (after all danger of frost).

Note that not all the seed will germinate. In this case, you can either throw away the pots or keep the pots cool and damp all summer to sit outdoors. Growing roses from seed using pots from this point on is the same as the technique below.

The second method of germinating seed is to sow it directly into pots or a large 10x20" flat filled with soil. The soil in the flat should be a sterilized artificial soil. If you've had the open bag around for a while, pour a kettle of boiling water slowly over the flat of soil to sterilize it and kill of any fungal problems.

The seed need only be barely covered and not planted very deeply. Firm the soil down after you've planted the flat so that the covering soil is in contact with the seed. It is important to keep the seed damp.

Cover the seed flat with door screening and secure it firmly. The door screening will be necessary to protect the seed from mice and ants.

Put the flat outdoors in a protected location. Leave until spring.

In spring, you can bring the flat indoors to give it a little heat or you can leave it outdoors to germinate on its own. Once the seeds have germinated, transplant as above and grow on until planted in the garden.

Leave non-germinated seed in the flat and keep damp and shaded all summer. Allow to stay outdoors a second winter and then germinate the slower second crop of seedlings the second summer. Toss the flat away after two seasons.

You Can Keep Roses Alive All Winter With No Protection

An alternative system to growing roses from seed is to cut the bottom off a large nursery container and sink this into the ground so that only the lip is showing. Sterilize the regular garden soil inside the pot by pouring several kettles of boiling water over it. Sow the seed in place and slightly cover with vermiculite or sterilized potting soil.

The seed will germinate over two years and you can remove the seedlings when they have reached 4-6 true leaves, transplanting them into pots for growing on and transplanting into the garden when large enough.

After two years, there are not many viable seeds left and you can dig up the area - sterilize it again and start some other seeds in this space.

In growing roses from seed, I have not allowed the hips to stay on the canes over the winter but I'm told by rose growers in more moderate climates than mine (USDA 7) they have sown seed that has stayed on the canes and it has germinated quite nicely after being chilled outdoors on the cane.

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Look for roses that set a lot of large hips, and leave some of these hips on the plants all summer. In the late summer or fall, collect hips that have ripened. They'll usually be yellow, orange, or red. Cut them open with a knife, and dig out the creamy white seeds. These are the achenes, in botanical terms. Each achene has the true seed inside, but for practical purposes, we can think of achenes as seeds.

Most roses originally came from colder climates, and their seeds need to survive a winter before they sprout. We can trick them into sprouting by giving them a stratification treatment—a period of moist, cold storage.

Rinse the seeds of any fruit pulp and plant them about one-quarter inch deep in a seed-planting mix. I use a mixture of one-third perlite, one-third vermiculite and one-third peat moss. I like to use the clear plastic

cherry tomato or strawberry cartons, and I plant multiple seeds per container. Seal each container in a plastic bag and refrigerate. Be sure to label each container, indicating the parent variety and the seed-planting date.

After eight to twelve weeks, bring the containers out into a warm environment (about 70°F). I like to time this for early spring, when seeds are normally waking up and sprouting. As your seeds sprout, carefully transplant the seedlings to other pots with a small spoon or the end of a plant label. Don't touch the roots during this process. Feed the seedlings with half-strength fertilizer and give them lots of light when they start to grow.

After several weeks, put containers with any unsprouted seeds back in the refrigerator for another month, then try them again in the warm environment. Depending on the variety, seeds may continue to sprout over several months, but don't expect more than thirty percent of the seeds to sprout overall.

Young rose seedlings are susceptible to damping off, a disease in which the stem rots at the soil surface. To minimize damping off, use a sterile planting soil, don't over-water and, if you like, use a fungicide right after the plants come up. Provide good air circulation and lots of light.

Some of your rose seedlings may also develop powdery mildew. It is probably best to discard those plants, since they are not likely to develop resistance later in life. Keep the robust, healthy seedlings instead.

If your seeds' parents were both repeat-flowering varieties, the seedlings may flower in as little as five or six weeks after planting. Most will send up a long stem and flower in the first season. If either parent was a once-flowering rose, however, the seedlings may not flower the first year. Some may take three years or more to flower for the first time, but with a little patience, you will eventually be a proud parent.

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In the late summer or fall, collect hips that have ripened -- they'll usually be yellow, orange, or red. Cut them open with a knife, and shell out the creamy white "seeds." These are technically "achenes," each of which has the true seed inside, but for practical purposes of growing them, we can think of them as seeds.

Most roses come from colder climates than Florida, and their seeds are programmed to survive a winter before they sprout. We can trick them into sprouting by giving them a "stratification" treatment -- a period of moist, cold storage. Rinse the seeds if they have a lot of fruit pulp on them, and wrap them in a moist paper towel. Place that packet into a zip-loc bag, and place it in the refrigerator (not the freezer). Be sure to include a label, indicating the parent variety and the date. Don't feed it to the

dog or the spouse, as a left-over meal... After 4 or 5 weeks, start checking on the seeds every week or two. At some point, you'll notice little root tips poking out of some of the seeds. Carefully transfer these to pots of soil, cover them with about 1/4 inch of soil, water them in, and keep them at room temperature. They should emerge in a few days. Be careful in transferring them since they are quite fragile, and they tend to stick to the paper towel. It's very easy to break the root off of the seed. I use a blunt pair of tweezers for this process. Put the unsprouted seeds back in the refrigerator for another week or two, and check them again. Depending on the variety, seeds may continue to sprout for several months. So you'll likely make several transfers to warm soil, over that period.

Very young rose seedlings are quite susceptible to damping-off, a disease in which the stem rots at the soil surface. Avoid it by using a sterile planting soil to start with, not over-watering, and if you like, use a copper-based fungicide right after the plants come up. Another common problem with rose seedlings is that a high percentage of them will be highly susceptible to powdery mildew. It's probably best to discard those plants, since they'll not likely become resistant later in life. Keep the robust, healthy seedlings instead.

If the seeds' parents were both repeat-flowering varieties, the seedlings can flower in as little as 5 or 6 weeks after planting. They'll almost certainly flower in the first season. If either parent was once-flowering, however, the seedlings may not flower in the first year, and some may wait 3 years or even more to flower for the first time.