What is a “Maiden” Rose?
By Georgie Bever, Consulting Rosarian

“Maiden” is a term used to refer to a newly grafted rose plant that has not yet been grown in the soil. All grafted roses for purchase started out as a “maiden.”

Roses are grafted by taking living tissue of one rose and implanting the tissue into the shank of an own-root rose that has proven to be a good source of root stock. As the tissue begins to grow it will push a “bud” out of the shank of the root stock.

Picture 1 shows tissue of the rose ‘Dona Martin’ that has been implanted into the shanks of ‘Rosa Multiflora’ rootstock. ‘Rosa Multiflora’ was chosen for the understock because it is more winter hardy than most other understocks available. Many of the grafted roses purchased at garden centers are grafted onto ‘Doctor Huey’, which is the most commonly used understock.

The maiden roses used for this article were purchased from Wisconsin Roses, and were received on April 27, 2016.

During the shipping, these maidens were warm and moist and began to bud out. Picture 2 shows a closer view of the new growth on both the canes of the understock and on the graft of ‘Dona Martin.’ Notice that the new growth on the understock is significantly bigger than the tiny bud of ‘Dona Martin.’ The roses were soaked, dipped in root stimulator, and planted in pots containing enriched planting medium. The newly potted maidens were kept safe from frost, given plenty of sunlight, and kept moist but not overly wet.

Within a matter of days, the canes of the ‘Rosa Multiflora’ have produced new leaves and shoots.
“Maiden” Roses continued.

For the maiden to begin to grow and thrive, the shank of ‘Rosa Multiflora’ must be cut just above the bud of ‘Dona Martin’ as shown in picture 4.

The maidens could have been planted in soil, but because Spring in Colorado is unpredictable, these maidens were left in their pots until the end of August. By August 1, 2016 the roses had produced canes, leaves, flowers, and had begun a good root structure as shown in pictures 5 and 6.

‘Dona Martin’ was planted in soil on August 27, 2016, and appears to be surviving the Zone 5 winter as shown in picture 7, which was taken on January 19, 2017. (Photos © Tom Keilers)