

Plant Cultivation Notes

Roscoea.

Roscoea are a group of plants belonging to the Ginger family and predominately found in the Himalayan mountains of India and China. The plants grow from an underground rhizome that resembles a bunch of fleshy fingers. In spring the plant produces a pseudo-stem with opposing of leaves. The leaves vary according to the species, some narrow, some broad, all mid green. The flowers are held at the top of the pseudo-stem and are orchid like in shape. They vary in colour from dark purple to white or yellow. There is even a fantastic red species. Plants vary in size from a few centimetres to 50cm tall again dependant on the species.



Cultivation.

We have found most of the Roscoea species to be fairly easy in cultivation, particularly when a few rules are followed. It is important to remember that Roscoea are deciduous and that they are dormant throughout winter. For this reason it is important to select a well drained position, ideally with some light shade in summer. Wet or waterlogged, heavy soils will result in the rhizomes rotting off in winter. We have experimented with Roscoea and have found that they are very hardy as long as the rhizomes are in very well drained soil, this is true of plants in pots as well as open ground. Our favourite site for Roscoea is in our raised beds, which were originally designed for Agave and other succulents.



Roscoea rhizome showing the growing point in the centre of the 'fingers'

Plant new rhizomes in late spring or late Autumn. Dig a hole about 20-30cm deep and 20cm wide. Mix the removed soil with 40% grit (we use Hydroleca or pumice) and add some multipurpose compost. Put 2 cm of the mixed backfill into the hole and then place the rhizome at the bottom of

the hole. The growing point must face up, with the fingers pointing down. Then carefully cover the rhizome with the rest of the mixed backfill.

New growth will appear in late spring to early summer, dependant on the species.

Roscoea do like plenty of water and feed when in growth and will even flower more than once if the right conditions are given.

The pseudo-stem will begin to die back in early autumn and should be allowed to collapse before removal. A mulch of bark chips can be applied in very cold areas.



Roscoea schneideriana

Pot culture is also possible for all Roscoea. To grow in pots pick a pot of around 10 litre capacity, terracotta pots are best. Place plenty of crocks in the bottom of the pot for drainage. Mix a very loose potting compost. We use the following: 40% multipurpose compost (Peat free/coir based) 30% potting grit (Hydroleuca or pumice are best) 30% John Innes number 1 (or screened, treated top soil/loam). We add a handful of biochar and a slow release fertiliser, but they are not absolutely necessary. Fill about a quarter of your pot with the potting mix and then place 5 to 6 (dependant on species) rhizomes into the pot, keeping a gap between the rhizomes and the sides of the pot. Now backfill with your potting mix. The pot of Roscoea can be placed outside in spring in a warm, sheltered location, against a south west wall is good. Once growth starts move the pot to a part shade, part sunny, sheltered location and keep well watered. Once the flowers are over and the pseudo-stem has died back, move

the pot to a cold, frost free position - an unheated greenhouse is ideal and keep the compost on the dry side throughout winter. In early spring turn the pot out and remove some of the compost from below and above the rhizomes, then replot with fresh compost.

Roscoea are thankfully fairly resistant to pests and diseases, but watch out for vine weevil and slugs and snails can bother new shoots.

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Roscoea 'Ice Maiden'