

Way to Grow in Orinda

Picking the Right Roses for Your Garden Can Be Thorny Business

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The rose is arguably the most popular flower in the world, and it is also our national flower. Roses come to mind this month because of Valentine's Day and their love and friendship symbolism. But with so many varieties to choose from, and new varieties being developed all the time, picking the right roses for your garden can be overwhelming.

Roses are known for being one of the most finicky and time-consuming flowers to grow even for the devoted competitive exhibitor or rose club enthusiast, but don't let that intimidate you. Anyone can successfully grow gorgeous, healthy roses with just a little reliable information and as much tender loving care as you have the time to give.

Orinda offers its own set of challenges for rose growing. We have a moderately cool climate with fog and a considerable amount of shade. Then there is that pesky deer problem. They love roses, too, and given the invitation of an open gate, deer will choose your roses over just about any other flower on your garden menu.

In spite of all these challenges, we are proud to boast that our garden has about 60 rose bushes including 45 or more varieties. We have also successfully included many of these varieties in the gardens we have designed and installed in the Lamorinda area. So, the roses we list here have a proven track record in Orinda.

Since the rose growing space in our own garden is limited, we've developed the following criteria for choosing any new rose varieties. First, they must be fairly disease resistant. Second, their blooms need to be beautiful both in bud and blooming stages, and they should add to the garden's color until the bloom is falling apart. Beautiful rose petals can still be enjoyed as a colorful carpet on the floor of your garden. Third, they need to tolerate a mixed planting border. Finally, the rose must be a repeat bloomer, giving us more than one show per year. Fragrance and fall hips are a plus but not an absolute must.

New rose varieties are always being produced, so if a rose doesn't meet up to

our garden standards after a testing period of one to two years, we have no problem giving it away and trying a new one. Because there are so many different classes of roses we'll limit the ones here to the three types that are currently available at your local nurseries: hybrid teas, floribundas and climbing roses.

Hybrid Tea Roses

Hybrid teas are best described as the familiar florist bouquet-style rose bloom. They have a spiral center with a long stem. The modern hybrid tea makes an excellent garden plant as breeders have been concentrating on improving disease resistance and overall garden performance. Favorites include:

Double Delight – America's top selling rose of dark pink and red with a creamy white center.

Just-Joey – Large peachy/apricot blooms that make a great garden accent to any purple foliage plants.

Black Beauty – Our favorite dark red rose with tons of long stem blooms on a large, tough plant. A close second and still in our garden is Ingrid Bergman. Mr. Lincoln is another beautiful dark red rose, but it requires much more work.

Secret – Our favorite light pink rose with a dark pink halo.

Rio-Samba – A hot, hot, hot party of colors including yellow, apricot, red, and pink.

St. Patrick – Greenish yellow buds that open to a bright yellow, long lasting bloom.

Rene Hugo – Excellent dark purple/pink cutting rose, hard to find but worth the search.

Leonidas – Our favorite rose of all has a terra cotta petal trimmed in caramel with a creamy yellow underside. This is the most labor intensive rose we grow, and we have five of them. They are worth the extra effort.

Floribundas

Floribundas come in many shapes and sizes and are commonly called cluster flowered roses or bouquet roses. Floribundas usually make great landscape

specimens with unmatched flower power. Most are two to four feet tall but some, usually called grandifloras or modern shrub roses, reach heights of seven to eight feet. Favorite floribundas include:

Brass Band – With copper, apricot and yellow colors, this bright beauty has outstanding disease resistance and is a real crowd pleaser. We plant 50 or more of these roses every year because they go so well with the California garden palette.

Fame – An outstanding deep pink, long lasting rose. Probably our second most popular one. We even had some of these blooms last long enough to be on our Christmas table one year.

Singing in the Rain – A blend of shades of apricot, this old-fashioned rose gives an antique quality to any garden.

All that Jazz – Grows five to six feet high with a very interesting pink, orange, and dark salmon color combination. This is an easy-to-care-for plant that works well if you want some bright color at this height.

Sally Holmes – Truly, one stem full of blooms is a bouquet. It is also the only white rose (with just a hint of pink) on this list and it grows to well over six feet in one year.

Hot Cocoa – Creamy chocolate is the only way to describe this one, which is Cathy's favorite rose and not just for its name. This rose has a soft petal, antique look. We've used this in many gardens. It looks great trained to grow up a rusty trellis or planted next to terra-cotta pots or pillars.

Kaleidoscope – No other rose looks like this one with its unique color that blends from orange to caramel to dark and light pink. A mass of this rose planted with all purple Mexican sage stops traffic.

Honey Dijon – We are still testing this exciting new floribunda with a color very similar to Dijon mustard. This rose performed fair in our garden this (its first) year. Planted in front of a maroon flax, Honey Dijon provided a beautiful color contrast. It will be added to the recommended list next year if its health and bloom performance improves.

Climbing Roses

There are many classes of climbing roses that can be trained to grow up walls, over gazebos, arbors, etc. Many of the most popular climbing roses are single season bloomers, but in our climate there are many ever-blooming climbers available to replace them. Climbing roses can also be used as ramblers, covering large expansive grounds or eyesores in the garden. We recently had the challenge of camouflaging a concrete

drainage ditch in a garden. We covered it with a rebar trellis and planted a grouping of fast growing, climbing roses. Our favorite climbing roses include:

Excellenz Von Schubert – Has a light but strong pink and purple tone. This Oregon damask rose is strongly fragrant and almost always covered in long grape-like clusters of half-dollar sized blooms. This is a great small climbing rose. Try planting it on a small trellis in combination with a purple clematis or small purple-leafed grape.

Cornelia – Another Oregon damask rose. This one has a light salmon pink bloom.

Cocktail – A nice climber up to 15 feet with red and white single blooms. This climber is in bloom so much it's hard to time a pruning.

Altissimo – This single petal rose with a vibrant, velvety red color contrasted by yellow stamens makes a dramatic statement. It is a short climber and is perfect for training across a wall trellis. It also produces awesome orange rose hips for your fall bouquets.

Royal Sunset – Its name best describes the color of this climber/pillar rose that has good bouquet-length stems and hybrid-tea-style blooms.

Eden – The buds start out green, pink, and white opening to old English-style large blooms (like paper roses). This rose is a frequent bloomer.

If you have been hesitant to add roses to your garden because of poor past experience with this sometimes-finicky flower or because the list of choices was too overwhelming, we hope this column has helped.

In a future column we will provide more information on shrub-style and landscape roses as well as a care guide for growing spectacular roses in our area. If you are interested in receiving a quick care guide right away, please email us at gardenlights@comcast.net.