

EASY-CARE ROSES

BY CHRISTINE ALLEN

Roses have a reputation for being demanding plants to grow well. Partly it's because gardeners buy them on impulse, seduced by a pretty flower on a label. And they neglect a few simple strategies, both in selecting and in planting, that make all the difference between a happy plant and a miserable one.

Giving your rose a good start means buying and planting it in spring, as soon as stocks appear in garden centers. The earlier in the season that you plant it, the sooner its roots become established and the better it will perform. However, the roses on display will be just leafing out, which means that you will be relying on the labels for information about flower shape, color and scent, all of which will be described in glowing prose.

This is when it really helps to have a few names in mind. Doing a little research in advance is always preferable to buying on impulse. Regional gardening magazines and books by local experts are well worth consulting before you visit a garden center (see References). Internet sites provide useful photographs, although usually of a single bloom, rarely the whole plant. Local rose shows are also a good way to find a flower you like, and most have an information booth staffed by members who can give recommendations and useful advice. Failing that, the varieties listed in this fact sheet are good, reliable choices for BC gardens.

Few shrubs have as wide a range of sizes, growth habits, flower form and color as roses. Identifying your preferences before you buy will make the choice easier.



Rosa 'Heritage' PHOTO: Vic Bentley

HYBRID TEAS AND FLORIBUNDAS

For the last 100 years, the most popular roses have been Hybrid Tea or Floribunda varieties. These are the long-stemmed, long-lasting blooms in a wide range of colors that are beloved of florists and exhibitors in rose shows. Hybrid Teas produce one flower per stem, sometimes with a couple of side buds, while Floribundas have a cluster of blooms all roughly the same size.

These roses are usually sold grafted onto the rootstock of a more vigorous variety as their own root systems are hard-pressed to support the continuous display of bloom that is their most popular feature. Choose a plant that has at least three strong stems emerging from the crown (the graft point).



Front cover:
Rosa 'Graham Thomas'
PHOTO: Vic Bentley

They require more attention than other kinds of roses to thrive: a regime of watering, fertilizing, spraying and pruning, which doesn't really qualify as easy care. However, these are the roses that most people want and it pays to do your homework before buying because the wide range available includes many that have been bred for qualities other than health and vigor.

These types of roses grow best when they don't have to compete with other plants for water and fertilizer. Ideally, they should be given a bed of their own. They have a natural vase shape, bearing most of their flowers on the top half of the bush, and are traditionally surrounded by a low hedge of boxwood or lavender to screen their sparse lower limbs.

Recommended Hybrid Teas

Chicago Peace (pink-apricot)
Eliana (pale yellow)
Fragrant Cloud (tomato red)
Frédéric Mistral (pale pink)
Kordes Perfecta (pearl pink/red edge)
Loving Memory (red)
Rosemary Harkness (peach)
Royal William (red)
Savoy Hotel (pale pink)
Sunset Celebration (soft apricot)

SHRUB ROSES

This is a catch-all category of roses that make more leafy, rounded bushes than Hybrid Teas or Floribundas. The flowers are looser and more fragile; they may be single, double or multi-petalled and are often well-scented. They may be large or small but, if the latter, are produced in great profusion. Some of the best bloom only for one glorious month in summer, but compensate with colored foliage or pretty rosehips in fall.

In this category are the easiest roses of all, the *Rugosa* roses, recognizable by their prickly grey stems and wrinkled (rugose) leaves. Thanks to the texture of these leaves, disease spores are unable to attach to them. Most rugosas grow tall and wide but, if necessary, can be controlled by pruning. Almost all the rugosas have foliage that turns gold or russet in fall and many produce decorative rosehips the size and color of cherry tomatoes. All will repeat bloom, especially if deadheaded. They are without exception hardy, drought-tolerant and, once established, will thrive in spite of neglect. With thorns that deter intruders, they make excellent barriers and can be sheared into an informal hedge.

Recommended Rugosas

Blanc Double de Coubert (white)
Fru Dagmar Hastrup (china-pink)
Hansa (magenta)
Jens Munk (mauve-pink)
Roseaie de l'Haie (crimson)



Rosa 'Bonica' PHOTO: Vic Bentley

These are roses that pre-date 1867. They are quite trouble-free and will tolerate considerable neglect. Those in the Alba and Gallica groups thrive best in the B.C. climate. They bloom luxuriantly but produce all their flowers at the same time, and so are less popular than repeat-blooming roses. They don't require pruning, but if it is necessary to shape or control growth, it must be done as soon as they finish flowering, unlike most other roses which are pruned in spring. All are intensely fragrant, although their color range is limited to white through all shades of pink to dark crimson-red. Some produce good rosehips and a few will even produce a second flush of bloom.

Recommended OGRs

Celestial (blush-pink)
Complicata (pink/white)
Ispahan (mid-pink)
Jacques Cartier (soft pink), repeat-blooms
Konigin von Danemark (pink)
Rosa Mundi (pale-pink/dark-pink stripes)
Rose De Resht (scarlet), repeat-blooms
Tuscany Superb (velvet-red)



Rosa 'Apricot Nectar' (Floribunda rose) PHOTO: Vic Bentley

David Austin

These are sometimes called English roses, and have become popular for their combination of flower shape and fragrance reminiscent of Old Garden Roses with the long-blooming characteristics and bold colors of modern varieties. There are now many available but they vary considerably in terms of health and vigor.

A number of shrub roses don't fall into the above categories, but have earned a place in any list of easy-care roses.

Recommended David Austin Roses

Abraham Darby (apricot)
Gertrude Jekyll (medium pink)
Graham Thomas (yellow)
Heritage (pink)
L.D. Braithwaite (red)
Mary Rose (pink)
Sweet Juliet (pale apricot)
Windrush (white)

Other healthy repeat-blooming shrub roses

Bonica (pale pink)
Mutabilis (red/chamois/pink)
Darlow's Enigma (white)
Penelope (blush-white)
Felicia (pink)
Sally Holmes (ivory)
Golden Wings (pale yellow)
The Fairy (pink)

SPECIES ROSES

In this group are some of the healthiest, easiest roses to grow. Coming to us straight from the wild, they have a natural vigor and resistance to disease. Flowers are often small and simple, but make up for this with intense fragrance. In one case, it is the lovely foliage as much as the flowers that makes the rose desirable, in another the size and colour of the thorns. Yet another has scented leaves. These are good roses for blending into mixed beds or anchoring a corner.

Recommended Species Roses

Rosa eglanteria (pink; fragrant foliage)
R. glauca (rubrifolia) (pink; grey/plum foliage)
R. woodsii var. *fendleri* (pink, BC native)
R. gallica officinalis (crimson, red hips)
R. pimpinellifolia (cream, black hips)
R. sericea pteracantha (white, huge red thorns)

CLIMBERS AND RAMBLERS

These two categories overlap. A rough rule of thumb is that climbers have coarser, more angular growth and produce larger flowers over a long period. They need to be attached securely to a wall or trellis and require spring pruning of the laterals (the side branches) and perhaps the tips of long canes to encourage flower production.

Ramblers have long, lax canes that will make their own way over supports. Most flower prolifically once a year, often followed by a display of small rosehips. Although they are popular choices for growing up trees, they produce more flowers if grown horizontally, over a fence or wall. Once established they are among the toughest roses, requiring little by way of water, fertilizer or pruning.

Recommended Climbers (repeat-blooming)

Altissimo (deep red)
Dortmund (scarlet, white eye)
Dublin Bay (red)
Royal Sunset (apricot)
Warm Welcome (tangerine)

Recommended Ramblers (once-blooming except *)

Adelaide d'Orléans (pearly-white)
Albertine (salmon-pink)
Félicité Perpétue (crimson/white)
Francis E. Lester (pink/white)
Ghislaine de Féligonde* (buff/apricot)
Lykkefund (pale peach/cream)
Rosa mulliganii (white)
Seagull (white)
Veilchenblau (violet)



Rosa 'Frau Dogmar Hastrup' (Rugosa rose) PHOTO: Vic Bentley

REFERENCES

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